

L.A. PHILANTHROPIST CYNTHIA STAFFORD INVITES LOCAL TITLE 1 STUDENTS TO "GIFTED DAY AT THE GEFFEN"

Special Guest City Controller Wendy Greuel Joins Q&A with Students
Monday, April 16, 2012

LOS ANGELES, April 9, 2012 – Philanthropist and Geffen Playhouse Board Member **Cynthia Stafford** is once again joining forces with the **Partnership for Los Angeles Schools** and the **Geffen Playhouse** to host the second annual **Gifted Day at the Geffen**. After winning the California lottery in 2007, Ms. Stafford became one of Los Angeles' most well-known philanthropists, lending dedicated support to the Geffen Playhouse education and outreach programs. This annual event, which invites honors students from underserved area schools to enjoy a day of theater education, is one of Ms. Stafford's unique contributions to arts education. Cynthia Stafford's Gifted Day at the Geffen includes a pre-show workshop, transportation to and from the theater, a matinee performance, lunch and a post-show Q&A with the cast and special guests including **L.A. City Controller Wendy Greuel**.

"I believe that education is vital to whatever it is you want to do or become in life, and that the arts open minds to the creative possibilities that exist, thereby developing a well rounded individual and society," said Cynthia Stafford. "Today we are combining those two very important things by introducing exceptional students – those who excel in spite of their surroundings, circumstances and situations – to arts education."

This year, 240 students from **Samuel Gompers Middle School** and **Robert Louis Stevenson Middle School** will pack the Geffen on **Monday, April 16** for a main stage performance of ***Rock the Presidents***, a high-energy rock musical presented by nationally recognized youth theater company **Childsplay**. Described in *USA Today* as "a blast of guitar-crunching, fist-pumping, lighter-flicking awesomeness," ***Rock the Presidents*** features stories spanning the 223 years of the American presidency and is brought to life by an all-original rock, pop and folk music soundtrack.

After the show, students will have the opportunity to dig deeper with a **Q&A session** with the cast of ***Rock the Presidents***, Cynthia Stafford, her husband, film and television producer Lanré Idewu, as well as local political expert **Wendy Greuel**. The panel discussion will be moderated by **Geffen Playhouse Artistic Director Randall Arney**.

Prior to the event, Geffen teaching artists will visit the participating schools and give a pre-show workshop, encouraging students to get involved in the political theme of the production by writing campaign speeches that

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include one dream they have for the future of the United States and three promises they would make to their constituents if they were to run for office. Then, Stafford and the Geffen's education department will select one speech to be read aloud and shared with the entire audience.

In addition to "Gifted Day at the Geffen," *Rock the Presidents* is performing as a part of the Geffen Playhouse Saturday Scene on April 14, and with the help of the Geffen education and outreach team, the musical will also visit (free-of-charge) **10 Title I public schools** during its stay in the L.A. area.

LISTING EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

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Box office: 310-208-5454
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ABOUT THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

The Geffen Playhouse has been a hub of the Los Angeles theater scene since opening its doors in 1995. Noted for its intimacy and celebrated for its world-renowned mix of classic and contemporary plays, provocative new works and second productions, the Geffen Playhouse continues to present a body of work that has garnered national recognition. Named in honor of entertainment mogul and philanthropist David Geffen, who made the initial donation to the theater, the company was founded by Gilbert Cates, and is currently helmed by Artistic Director Randall Arney, Managing Director Ken Novice and Chairman of the Board Frank Mancuso. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen Playhouse welcomes an audience of more than 130,000 each year, and maintains an extensive education and outreach program, designed to engage young people and the community at large in the arts. For more information, please visit geffenplayhouse.com.

ABOUT CYNTHIA STAFFORD

Cynthia Stafford, entrepreneur and CEO/Founder of Queen Nefertari Productions, focuses her philanthropy efforts on empowerment in both education, particularly in children with special needs and women's rights, with a global agenda of ventures and causes she endows and capitalizes. While raising her deceased brother's children, Stafford won the California Lottery on Mother's Day in 2007. Ms. Stafford is one of the top philanthropists in Los Angeles. Stafford is also special liaison to the Geffen Playhouse's Education Advisory Board and is actively involved in a program which introduces children to the arts. Ms. Stafford has contributed and is involved in a number of charities, including the NRDC, Joan Rivers' charity God's Love We Deliver, and UNICEF. Stafford was recently selected by the Lifetime Network as one of its prestigious "Remarkable Women," alongside Michelle Obama, Hillary Clinton and Maria Shriver.

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

The Partnership for Los Angeles Schools was founded in 2007 as the cornerstone of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's strategy to improve education in Los Angeles. It is a unique collaboration between the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Unified School District to turn around LA's lowest performing schools and to create a model for doing so district wide. The largest non-district school operator in Los Angeles, the Partnership today manages 22 schools with nearly 16,500 students and 1,500 employees. The Partnership is a 501(c)3 non-profit education management organization with nearly 37 full-time employees. For more information, go to www.PartnershipLA.org.

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