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Ford's Theatre Education Announces National Oratory Fellows for 2019-2020 School Year

Teachers Represent 17 States Program Fosters Student Empathy and Inspires Civic Engagement

Washington, D.C. – The Ford's Theatre Education team announced the 2019-2020 cohort of 37 **National Oratory Fellows**, who were selected after a competitive application process. The Ford's Theatre National Oratory Fellows program, started in 2011, helps teachers integrate oratorical skills and strategies, from performance to speechwriting, into their curricula. Through oratory, students develop speaking, writing and leadership skills, in addition to gaining a deeper understanding of great American orators including Abraham Lincoln.

The 2019-2020 cohort of National Oratory Fellows includes teachers from 17 states and the District of Columbia. The 37 Fellows (in alphabetical order by state) are:

- Arizona: Alexandra Navarro and Kathryn Notarpole (Mesa)
- California: Lindsey Charron (Newport Beach), Karen Richey (Elk Grove) and Callen Taylor (San Francisco)
- Colorado: Angela Hambleton (Lafayette) Connecticut: Barbara Connery (Morris)
- Idaho: Wally Hames and Amber Obert (Kuna)
- Illinois: Joe Cernak (Homer Glen)
- Iowa: Jason Rude (New Hampton)
- Kansas: Monty L. Graber (Newton), Dave McIntire and Ben Rivers (Wichita)
- Kentucky: Joseph Moneymaker (Smithland)
- Maryland: Deborah Colbert Durgadeen (Takoma Park), Joyce Erb- Appleman (Bowie), Krista McKim, Susan Scola (Rockville) and Jim Rossi (Hagerstown)
- Missouri: Vanessa Holloway (Kansas City), Jennifer Stockdell, Jeff Weary and Melissa Woodward (Independence)
- Nebraska: Mike Buchanan (North Platte) and Darrin Comstock (Omaha)
- New Jersey: Lisa Romero (Edison)
- New York: Caitlyn Goodwin (McGraw)

- Ohio: Allison Decker, Casey Kaufman (Harrison) and Kelly Rowland (Toledo)
- Pennsylvania: Lauren Baxter and Georgette Hackman (Denver)
- Texas: Stacey Callaway (Midland)
- Virginia: Carinne Hackshaw (Alexandria)
- Washington, D.C.: Giani Clarkson, Marie Connolly and Angelo Parodi

The Fellows were invited to Ford's Theatre on August 3-4, 2019, to take part in a weekend retreat. This professional development opportunity included lectures, tailored workshops and special access to the Ford's Theatre Historic Site.

"The National Oratory Fellows program enables Ford's Theatre to continue Abraham Lincoln's legacy of powerful oratory by helping teachers to integrate the study of historical speeches, original speech writing and public speaking into classrooms around the country," said **Ford's Theatre Associate Director for Arts Education Cynthia Gertsen**. "Using Lincoln's words as a starting point, educators develop their skills to teach students the power of words to foster empathy across difference, unite people behind a common cause and inspire others to act for the common good."

During the 2019-2020 school year, the National Oratory Fellows will partner with Ford's Teaching Artists for virtual teaching and coaching via videoconference. The Fellows also meet virtually as a group every month to discuss best practices and support one another.

At the end of the school year, Fellows, in conjunction with Ford's Theatre Teaching Artists, will select two students who have demonstrated a commitment to building their public-speaking skills. In May 2020, Fellows and their student delegates will travel to Ford's to participate in a weekend retreat that will culminate in a performance of a historical or original speech on the Ford's Theatre stage.

Ford's Theatre education programs are supported by Lead Education Sponsor **BP America** with additional support from **Bloomberg Philanthropies, Comcast NBCUniversal, the National Park Service, Southern Company, United Technologies Corporation** and **Visa Inc.**

Schools and teachers interested in learning more about the National Oratory Fellows Program should visit www.fords.org/for-teachers/programs/oratory/national-oratory-fellowship or email education@fords.org.

Ford's Theatre Society

The Ford's Theatre Society was founded under the guidance of executive producer Frankie Hewitt, who, during her 35-year tenure, established Ford's as a living, working theatre producing performances that highlighted the diversity of the American experience. Since the arrival of Paul R. Tetreault as Director, critics and the theatregoing public have recognized Ford's for the superior quality of its artistic

programming. With works from the Tony-nominated *Come From Away* and nationally acclaimed *Big River* to the world premieres of *Meet John Doe*, *The Heavens Are Hung In Black*, *Liberty Smith*, *Necessary Sacrifices*, *The Widow Lincoln* and *The Guard*, Ford's Theatre is making its mark on the American theatre landscape. For its accomplishments, the organization was honored in 2008 with the National Medal of Arts. For more information, visit www.fords.org. In the past decade, the mission of Ford's Theatre Society expanded to include education as a central pillar. This expansion led to the creation and construction of the Center for Education and Leadership, which opened in February 2012. Currently, under the leadership of Board Chairman Phebe N. Novakovic, Ford's Theatre Society is advancing the unfinished work of Abraham Lincoln by creating a vibrant, accessible Ford's Theatre campus that cultivates civic discourse, supports our nation's educators and engages the community with our history.

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