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May 29, 2009

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**2009 VINCENT LEGACY SCHOLARSHIPS
TO FUND ARTS TRAINING FOR TWO KANSAS CITY TEENS**

Starlight Theatre surprises two recipients with in-school presentations of \$2,500 scholarships

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – In keeping with their organization’s vision statement of being a place “where performing arts share center stage with education,” Starlight Theatre officials recently shone the spotlight on two talented middle school students when they presented each with a \$2,500 Vincent Legacy Scholarship to fund continued training in acting, music and dance. The Starlight representatives were joined by Greg and Rebecca Reid, local community leaders and underwriters of the 4-year-old scholarship program, to make the 2009 announcements.

The group surprised the two winners – Erica Bess of Kansas City, Mo., and Kalen Allen of Kansas City, Kan. – by visiting their schools to share the good news in front of teachers, family and friends. The two were selected after completing a rigorous application process and auditioning at Starlight in late April.

Erica Bess, an eighth-grade student at Urban Community Leadership Academy, was recommended for the scholarship by her school counselor and forensic coach, Arthur Seabury, and science teacher,

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Geanean Anderson. In his letter of recommendation, Seabury cited Erica's exemplary performance as a member of the school's speech and debate team. "She has won in every outing against the finest schools in the region," he said, noting that Erica has earned first-place honors in dramatic acting, poetry and prose competitions. Seabury added that while Erica may appear quiet and shy at first, "give her a script and you will see the magic of the theatre open up right before your very eyes."

Erica has attended the Heart of America Shakespeare Camp. She also is active with the Kansas City Kids for Congress program, which promotes awareness of good health and better living.

In her letter of recommendation, Anderson called Erica "one of the most intellectual and well behaved students I have met in my seven years of teaching." She has been highly impressed with Erica's performance on the academy's forensic team. "On stage, she is 100 percent in character," Anderson said. "It is obvious that Erica is a natural when it comes to acting." Starlight will administer Erica's scholarship to provide further professional acting instruction.

Kalen Allen, a seventh-grade student at West Middle School in Kansas City, Kan., was recommended by his middle school principal, Shelly Beech, and instrumental music director, Jeff Hodges. In her recommendation letter, Beech cited Kalen's motivation and drive to succeed. "He expects much more of himself and will make the extra effort to reach his goals," Beech said. "There are those students who will leave a lasting impression. Kalen is one of those students."

Kalen, a Kauffman Scholar, said singing is his passion, but he's very willing to try other things. In past summers, he has participated in the Children Defense Fund Freedom School, where community service is part of the curriculum. He holds the positions of vice president for the NAACP Johnson County Branch Youth Council and secretary for West Middle School's Student Council.

Kalen has performed at many events, but singing the national anthem at the school district's 2007 convocation is one event that stands out for music director Hodges. "For a sixth-grader to be able to stand up in front of approximately 3,000 adults and sing in the fashion he did is no small accomplishment," Hodges said. Starlight will administer Kalen's scholarship to provide further vocal

performance training.

“We are very pleased with this year’s Vincent Legacy Scholarship recipients,” said Brad Jackson, Starlight’s associate producer and director of education and outreach. “They demonstrated a level of performance and dedication that is rare in students their age. While our decision to select a scholarship winner is always difficult, this year seemed to present two of the most wonderful and enthusiastic kids we could have asked for.”

Greg and Rebecca Reid established the Vincent Legacy Foundation in 2006 and set up an endowment fund at Starlight Theatre to provide youth who show performing arts promise, the opportunity to further refine and improve their skills through professional instruction. The endowment established the Vincent Legacy Scholarship Fund, which provides up to \$2,500 of professional training for minority youth in grades 6, 7 or 8 who exhibit a passionate interest and strong ability in vocal performance, dance and/or acting and who otherwise might not be able to secure further training.

Applicants must maintain a B average or better in school, demonstrate an excellent attendance record at school, and exhibit involvement in community service. The selection of qualified applicants is based on written recommendations from the applicant’s primary academic instructor, his or her performance instructor(s) and coach(es), a written request for consideration from the student, and written support and encouragement from each applicant’s parent(s) or guardian(s).

Starlight Theatre

Presenting Broadway entertainment since 1951, the non-profit Starlight Theatre Association is Kansas City’s oldest and largest performing arts organization. The Association operates, programs and maintains the largest stage in the United States, as well as the 16-acre Starlight Theatre complex. While assuming all annual operating costs for the complex, the Association also raises funds for capital improvements and a variety of programs, including national Broadway musical performances, concerts, community outreach and education. Since 2000, the Association has contributed more than \$25 million of privately funded improvements to the Kansas City, Mo.-owned Starlight Theatre. Each Broadway season, Starlight donates more than 11,000 tickets to its performances to regional non-profit organizations serving the disadvantaged.

In 2008, Starlight Theatre was selected as the “Favorite Performing Arts Venue or Organization” in the Kansas City Convention & Visitors Association’s Visitors’ Choice Awards program. Starlight also received a Gold Award for “Best Performing Arts Venue” and Bronze Award for “Best Theater” in *Ingram’s* 2008 Best of Business Kansas City Awards. The theatre seats approximately 8,000 and is located in Swope Park.

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