

Hundreds of Low-Income Families Expected to Gather in Hopes of Enrollment at Esteemed Afterschool Arts Organization

SANTA ANA, Calif. (September 17, 2013) - The Wooden Floor, an arts-based youth development nonprofit, is expecting a large turnout of low-income, primarily Latino families, on **Saturday, October 19, 2013**, as it opens its doors for its **Annual Auditions Day**.

A safe afterschool haven for 375 under-served youth year-round, **The Wooden Floor** is currently celebrating its 30th year of providing its students with free long-term dance education, focused academics programs, pre-collegiate mentoring, and family services. Since 2005, 100 percent of its graduates have enrolled in college—something done by only about 30 percent of their socioeconomic peers.

Last year, 406 low-income students and their families vied for a chance at securing a spot in the organization. That number is expected to rise again this year, serving as a poignant reminder of the impact the arts and education has on low-income communities. Many arrive as early as 2 o'clock in the morning, sleeping at the gate of the organization's building, hoping to gain an edge.

A recent alumna of the organization, Jennifer Hernandez '13, recalls her audition day. "I remember that Saturday morning so vividly because as we drove into the parking lot I was overwhelmed to see the long line of hundreds of other kids who were trying to earn a spot just like me. At that moment, I felt proud of myself for putting myself out there and never would I have imagined that this one small step would lead me towards a journey of success." Jennifer, the first in her family to go to college, is currently studying Business at Chapman University.

Students need only two requirements to audition—show that they have the desire to move and come from a family with significant financial need. A typical family at The Wooden Floor is a family of five living on \$30,137 a year; a figure considered "extremely-low Income" for Orange County by the **Department of Housing and Urban Development**.

Annual Auditions Day is held at the culmination of The Wooden Floor's **Dance Free Weeks**, a successful three-week community engagement endeavor to provide approximately 3,000 students in Santa Ana and surrounding school districts with free dance education. The program has won praise from local educators and administrators who note the positive communication and motivation dance fosters within the students, who are then encouraged to audition for The Wooden Floor's year-round programs.

"Annual Auditions day is the most moving day for me, as I drive up and see a line stretched around the building," states **Artistic Director & Co-CEO Melanie Ríos Glaser**, "It is so very encouraging to know that if these students stay at The Wooden Floor for up to 10 years, they will most likely be the first in their family to enroll in college." 136 alumni of organization are currently enrolled in colleges across the nation, with 80 percent receiving college scholarships from The Wooden Floor.

EVENT DETAILS

What: The Wooden Floor Annual Auditions

When: Saturday, October 19, from 8:30am-1:30pm

Where: 1810 North Main Street, Santa Ana, CA 92706

How: Complete information is available in English and Spanish at www.TheWoodenFloor.org/Auditions and by calling 714-541-8314 ext. 128.

Auditioning families should be aware the process may take up to several hours, depending on the number of auditioning youth.

Sponsors: Surdna Foundation and Dizzy Feet Foundation



Hundreds of families line the sidewalk between 18th and 19th streets on Main Street in Santa Ana in 2011.

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To cover this event, schedule an interview with The Wooden Floor's Artistic Director & Co-CEO, or to interview participating students, please call Payal Kumar Avellan at 714-541-8314 ext. 119 or e-mail Payal@TheWoodenFloor.org. High resolution photos and video of auditions or other The Wooden Floor activities are available upon request.