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Hundreds of Low-Income Families Expected to Gather at The Wooden Floor for its Once-a-Year Enrollment as Need for Life-Changing Assistance Grows

SANTA ANA, Calif. (September 29, 2015) - **The Wooden Floor**, an arts-based youth development nonprofit, is hoping for a large turnout of low-income, primarily Latino families, on **Saturday, October 17, 2015**, as it opens its doors for its **Annual Auditions Day**. In order to reach the students who need The Wooden Floor's services the most, word is spread throughout the community about the opportunity to join The Wooden Floor.

A privately-funded nonprofit organization, The Wooden Floor uses a successful model of strategically-integrating intensive **dance education** with **academic programs, college and career readiness programs**, and **family support services** to help students change the way they think about themselves and aspire beyond the grip of the poverty cycle. Since 2005, **100 percent of The Wooden Floor's graduates have finished high school on time and immediately enrolled in college**—something done by only about 45 percent of their socioeconomic peers.

"Our Annual Auditions marks the day these students take the first step toward a bright and successful future," says **Executive Director & Co-CEO Dawn S. Reese**, "The youth we serve stay with us for up to 10 years—from third grade all the way through high school and onto college. Most are the first in their families to enroll in higher education and they effectively become change-agents in their community." Over 100 alumni of the organization are currently enrolled in colleges across the nation, with about 80 percent receiving merit-based college scholarships from The Wooden Floor.

Since The Wooden Floor only accepts new students once a year for a limited number of spots, the families come out in force—many arriving as early as 2 o'clock in the morning to get the first spot in line. Previous years have seen over 400 students audition. That number is expected to rise again this year, serving as a poignant reminder of the growing need in Orange County and the powerful impact free arts education has on low-income communities.

"Students need only two requirements to audition," says **Artistic Director & Co-CEO Melanie Ríos Glaser**, "Since dance is at the center of everything we do and serves as the catalyst for change, we are looking for students with an innate desire to move. They also must come from a family with significant financial need." A typical family at The Wooden Floor is a family of five living on about \$35,000 a year; a figure considered "extremely-low Income" for Orange County by the **Department of Housing and Urban Development**.

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 Administration at Chapman University.

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, celebrating its 30th year, has won praise from local educators and administrators who note the positive communication and motivation dance fosters within the students. Those **Dance Free Weeks** students are then encouraged to audition for The Wooden Floor's year-round programs.

EVENT DETAILS

What: The Wooden Floor Annual Auditions

When: Saturday, October 17, 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 the City of Santa Ana

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To cover this event, schedule an interview with The Wooden Floor's Executive Director & Co-CEO or Artistic Director & Co-CEO, or to interview participating students, please call Payal 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.