

REVERED OC ARTS-BASED YOUTH DEVELOPMENT NONPROFIT TO SERVE 100 MORE YOUTH IN 2017

SANTA ANA, Calif. (April 25, 2016) – **The Wooden Floor**, one of the nation's most cutting edge creative youth development organizations made a major announcement that it will grow to serve even more children by the end of 2017 at a new annex location within the Depot at Santiago workforce housing complex. Ground breaking for the project is expected this spring. The annex location will allow The Wooden Floor to serve 100 more youth and their families annually, in addition to the 375 already in its year-round programs. Each year, over 400 youth audition for enrollment at The Wooden Floor, and less than one-in-four are accepted due to high student retention and space constraints at The Wooden Floor's current campus in Santa Ana's Museum District. This is the second major physical expansion effort for the revered 33-year-old nonprofit.

"The Wooden Floor's Board of Directors and staff are excited to be answering the call from our community to serve more youth in Orange County. We have been exploring ways to leverage the organization's impact both locally and nationally. An ambitious strategic vision was set in 2009 to deepen our work in Orange County for those youth most in need, whom we can lift from a life of poverty through the power of dance and access to higher education," says **Dawn S. Reese, The Wooden Floor's Executive Director and Co-CEO**. "Our growth strategies have strengthened and evolved since 2009, and now also include a licensed partner in Washington DC, as well as future opportunities to eventually serve even more youth locally," she said.



Over 400 low-income youth and their families line up to audition for enrollment at The Wooden Floor in 2015. Less than one-in-four were able to be accepted due to high student retention and space constraints, amplifying the need for the organization's vision to serve more youth.

ABOUT THE DEPOT AT SANTIAGO PARTNERSHIP

"The Wooden Floor was specifically selected by Orange Housing Development Corporation and C&C Development to be a part of this workforce housing property due to the organization's outstanding reputation, high artistic quality, and results for those it serves," said Barry A. Cottle, Principal of C&C Development, the developer for Depot at Santiago. The City of Santa Ana has focused redevelopment efforts on the area where the Depot at Santiago will be located, viewing it as the arts gateway to the city. Orange Housing Development Corporation and C&C Development were introduced to The Wooden Floor through Shari Battle, Senior Vice President and OC Market Manager of the Enterprise Business and Community Engagement unit at Bank of America. In 2009, The Wooden Floor received the Neighborhood Builders Award, one of the bank's top leadership awards for nonprofit excellence, resulting in a long-term partnership between the two organizations. OHDC and C&C have a proven track record of assisting cities in achieving their affordable housing production goals through the new construction of multifamily units and adaptive reuse of existing underutilized properties. The Depot at Santiago, a mixed-use, transit-oriented development is designed for working families with incomes that range from 30% to 60% of area median income (AMI). The Depot at Santiago will include 70 apartments, open space, approximately 8,500 square feet of ground-level retail space, and a 3,000 square-foot community space housing The Wooden Floor's annex, featuring a dance floor as well as an education and family resource center.

IMPACT ON ORANGE COUNTY

"We know our approach to creative youth development works. It has resulted over the past 12 years in 100% of our seniors graduating from high school on time, and immediately enrolling in higher education, many being the first in their family to do so," says Reese. This immediate college enrollment rate is more than double the national average for the students' socioeconomic peers. Depot at Santiago fits within The Wooden Floor's long-term vision to grow local impact in meaningful and measurable ways by serving more Santa Ana students. The Wooden Floor shares a mutual commitment with the City of Santa Ana, C&C Development, and Orange Housing Development Corporation to improve the lives of children and families by providing a foundation of excellence in their homes, at school,

and after school. "As our students strive for higher education, their energy inspires family, friends, and neighbors to work toward bettering their lives, and soon, and our entire community has been transformed," said **Artistic Director and Co-CEO Melanie Ríos Glaser**.

Prudence is one of the hallmarks of The Wooden Floor's Board and Executive leadership, which has worked to fully understand the organizational readiness factors required to serve more students in Orange County. As always, currently enrolled students and the many future generations to be served through The Wooden Floor's year-round programs, are central to the organization's goals and actions. That focus on the students and families The Wooden Floor currently serves remains the same. "Our love and care for our community and our youth is why we do what we do - and do it with the highest passion and excellence," says **Dawn S. Reese, Executive Director and Co-CEO**. Current students of The Wooden Floor have also longed for more of their peers to have access to the organization. "The Wooden Floor impacts lives in a huge way," says Roxanna, a student in the Class of 2020. "I feel bad for people who aren't here, it is a special place that anyone would love to have in their life," she said.



Rendering of the future Depot at Santiago site in Santa Ana, to house an annex location of the youth development nonprofit The Wooden Floor.

ABOUT THE WOODEN FLOOR

The Wooden Floor's model has received countless awards and recognition, including the 2015 Leadership Circle Award from the PIMCO Foundation, the 2012 Afterschool Innovator Award from the Afterschool Alliance and The MetLife Foundation, the 2009 Neighborhood Builders Award from Bank of America, and the 2003 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award. Since 1983, more than 85,000 young lives have been touched by the organization. At its Santa Ana campus, it annually gives under-served local youth the tools to live fuller, healthier lives through a unique approach grounded in dance. The Wooden Floor makes a long-term investment in each of these young people. They engage in intensive dance education supported by academics, college and career readiness programs, and family support services that change the way they make decisions, helping them to discover and pursue their full potential. Since 2005, 100 percent of The Wooden Floor's senior class members have graduated from high school on-time and enrolled in higher education. This is more than double the national average for their socioeconomic peers. Find out more online at www.TheWoodenFloor.org

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