

## THE WOODEN FLOOR RECEIVES \$240,000 SURDNA THRIVING CULTURES GRANT

**SANTA ANA, CALIF. (July 14, 2016)** - **The Wooden Floor**, an award-winning creative youth development nonprofit, announced today that it has received a three-year Thriving Cultures grant from the Surdna Foundation totaling \$240,000. As part of their Teens' Artistic and Cultural Awareness priority, Surdna seeks to invest in organizations which further their belief in arts and culture training programs to help young people achieve their educational and career goals, and thereby catalyze change in their communities. The Wooden Floor's grant objective is to strengthen and deepen teen artistic programming in support of its long-term goals to transform youth in low-income communities through the power of dance and access to higher education. 100 percent of The Wooden Floor's graduating low-income youth finish high school on time and immediately enroll in higher education, pursuing careers mostly in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Math.

Almost all students at The Wooden Floor fall under the federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) poverty classifications of

"very low income" or "extremely low income." Through dance, young people develop the ability to think differently about themselves and learn how to innovate, communicate, and collaborate—necessary 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for success in school, work, and life. Among the teen programming The Wooden Floor has been funded to expand and enhance is: core dance education classes to serve a growing number of teen students; additional performance opportunities that highlight the artistic capacity of the organization's teens; and adding multi-disciplinary artistic programs that broaden the art-making experience and challenge teens to deepen exploration and expression of their personal and cultural identity through art-making and performance.

"We believe that by deepening the empowering effect of dance on our teens during their pivotal high school years, and encouraging them to reflect on their opportunity to be change-agents, we greatly enhance their self-agency and ability to thrive," says Dawn S. Reese, Executive Director and Co-CEO of The Wooden Floor. "The Surdna Foundation's generous grant aims to support our efforts to achieve and sustain even higher teen retention within our organization, which is tied to our Theory of Change. We know that the longer our students stay with us, particularly through high school graduation and into college, the more deeply rooted are the personal skills and qualities that lead to success in life," she said.

The Surdna Foundation has been a pivotal partner and funder of The Wooden Floor since 1997, investing more than \$1.2 million in the organization through Surdna's esteemed Thriving Cultures program.

### **About The Wooden Floor**

Since 1983, The Wooden Floor has touched the lives of over 85,000 young people. From our Santa Ana campus, we annually give 375 under-served local youth the tools to live fuller, healthier lives through a unique approach grounded in dance. We make a long-term investment in each of these young people, as they engage in intensive dance education supported by college and career readiness and family support services, which change the way they make decisions, helping them to discover and pursue their full potential. 100 percent of our graduates have finished high school on time and gone on to immediately enroll in higher education. This is more than double the national average for their socioeconomic peers. The Wooden Floor impacts even more youth by licensing its model to other low-income communities nationwide. [www.TheWoodenFloor.org](http://www.TheWoodenFloor.org)

### **About the Surdna Foundation**

The Surdna Foundation seeks to foster sustainable communities in the United States – communities guided by principles of social justice and distinguished by healthy environments, strong local economies, and thriving cultures. Learn more at [Surdna.org](http://Surdna.org).



**Students rehearse for The Wooden Floor's  
33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Concert held in June 2016**