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**COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF SARASOTA COUNTY AWARDS  
FST \$37,000 TO HELP PROVIDE WRITE A PLAY  
PROGRAMMING AT NO COST TO SCHOOLS**

(Sarasota, FL) — **Florida Studio Theatre** (FST) is delighted to announce that the nonprofit theater has received a \$37,000 grant from the **Community Foundation of Sarasota County**, a key partner in FST's efforts to provide its award-winning **WRITE A PLAY** program, entirely free of charge, to schools in Sarasota County. FST's **WRITE A PLAY** program is an arts-in-education initiative, giving students the example, inspiration, and the skills to write their own plays. **WRITE A PLAY** has impacted over 1 million young playwrights around the world since its inception in 1991.

This grant is provided by the **EdExploreSRQ Fund for Florida Studio Theatre**, which was created by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County and **The Patterson Foundation** in order to raise awareness of and increase access to programming offered by Sarasota's artistic, cultural, and scientific organizations, like **WRITE A PLAY**. Sarasota County teachers interested in FST's **WRITE A PLAY** program should contact FST's Director of Children's Theatre, **Caroline Kaiser**, at [ckaiser@floridastudiotheatre.org](mailto:ckaiser@floridastudiotheatre.org) or call 941-366-9797.

Sarasota County boasts hundreds of artistic and educational opportunities for youth, many of which are underutilized by teachers and students due to lack of awareness and funding restrictions. **EdExploreSRQ**, a web-based search platform, is helping transform the way Sarasota County teachers, principals, and parents learn about available experiential learning opportunities. Through **EdExploreSRQ**, educators at all grade levels can search through hundreds of offerings to identify which ones would be the best fit for their students. Then, the website helps connect teachers with program coordinators and apply for financial assistance through the **EdExploreSRQ** Fund. Additionally, Sarasota School District curriculum leaders have approved all of the activities featured on **EdExploreSRQ**'s website, ensuring they match educational standards and encourage academic success.

With this support, the Community Foundation and FST will, for the first time ever, provide **WRITE A PLAY** at no cost to schools in Sarasota County. A three-part program designed to connect with students and educators multiple times throughout the school year, **WRITE A PLAY** features a unique blend of streamed online productions, new digital educational resources, and virtual interactive workshops.

First, students experience “The Play That Sets The Example,” presented this year in partnership with the **Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall** as a streamed performance of a professional production created by **Arts Power**, a nonprofit national touring theatre. This school year, “The Play That Sets The Example” comes in two forms—a musical adaptation of **Chicken Dance** by Tammi Sauer for students in Pre-K to second grade, or a one-act musical of **Anne of Green Gables** for grades 3 to 6. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in virtual talkbacks with the original cast members of each show on select days, deepening their understanding of the material.

In the second part of the program, students experience “The Play That Inspires,” a virtual performance of award-winning plays written by past winning playwrights, and an interactive playwriting workshop, **Zoom Into Playwriting**. Conducted over Zoom, classes will work with professional teaching artists to improvise plays based on their own ideas and write a group play together as a class. Following Zoom Into Playwriting, teachers will have access to online resources and step-by-step writing guides to assist their students in writing their very own plays.

“As opportunities continue to shift to all things digital, the connective power of the arts and their impact on student experiential learning remain as important as ever,” says **Nicole Light**, Education Officer at the Community Foundation of Sarasota County. “That is why The Community Foundation is proud to support Florida Studio Theatre in developing virtual programming that will not only be free for teachers and students, but also serve as a way to increase access to these invaluable cultural learning experiences. Whether the stage is virtual or otherwise, *that* deserves a standing ovation.”

All students are encouraged to submit their work to FST’s Young Playwrights Festival playwriting competition, which receives submissions from more than 6,000 playwrights each year. Every script is read at least twice by FST staff and community volunteers, ultimately selecting a dozen plays for a full-scale production.

The third and final component of WRITE A PLAY is “The Play That Celebrates The Work of Young Playwrights,” a professional production of winning plays written during the 2020-2021 school year, this year titled **The Brave Princess & Other Winning Plays**. Classes will be able to stream this production online in Spring 2021.

Florida Studio Theatre has received a \$37,000 gift from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County to support its efforts to provide its award-winning **WRITE A PLAY** program, entirely free of charge, to schools in Sarasota County. This gift is provided by the **EdExploreSRQ Fund for Florida Studio Theatre**, which is supported by the Community Foundation and The Patterson Foundation. Sarasota County teachers interested in FST’s WRITE A PLAY program should contact FST’s Director of Children’s Theatre, **Caroline Kaiser**, at [ckaiser@floridastudiotheatre.org](mailto:ckaiser@floridastudiotheatre.org) or call 941-366-9797.

### ABOUT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF SARASOTA COUNTY

The Community Foundation of Sarasota County is a public charity founded in 1979 by the Southwest Florida Estate Planning Council as a resource for caring individuals and the causes they support, enabling them to make a charitable impact on the community. With assets of \$418 million in more than 1,500 charitable funds, the Community Foundation awarded grants and scholarships totaling \$21.5 million dollars last year in the areas of education, the arts, health and human services, civic engagement, animal welfare and the environment. Since its founding, the Community Foundation has been able to grant more than \$274 million to area nonprofit organizations to our community thanks to the generosity of charitable individuals, families, and businesses. For more information, visit [www.CFSarasota.org](http://www.CFSarasota.org) or call (941) 955-3000.

### ABOUT FLORIDA STUDIO THEATRE

Florida Studio Theatre (FST) is Sarasota's contemporary theatre. Founded in 1973, FST has grown to a village of five theatres located in the heart of Downtown, Sarasota. Each theatre is small in size and large in impact— providing intimate and engaging settings for high-quality, professional performances.

Today, FST has established itself as a major force in American Theatre. FST is the largest subscription theatre in the state of Florida and among the largest in the country, serving more than 230,000 live attendees each year across its six core programs: Mainstage, Cabaret, Stage III, Children's Theatre, Education, and New Play Development.

Even with its growth, Florida Studio Theatre remains firmly committed to making the arts accessible and affordable to as many people as possible. Under the leadership of Producing Artistic Director Richard Hopkins, FST develops theatre that speaks to our living, evolving, and dynamically changing world. Hip and historical, entertaining and challenging, we are the theatre where the street meets the elite — where everyone is welcome to engage in the art of theatre.

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