



# MEDIA

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## **LA MIRADA'S PHANTOM PROJECTS ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR ITS FIRST FEDERAL GRANT; \$50,000 FROM HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES 'COMPASSION CAPITAL FUND'**

LA MIRADA, CA. — For its tenth anniversary season, Phantom Projects Educational Theatre Group received nearly \$50,000 from its Uncle Sam. The “birthday present” from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Agency is the largest gift ever made to the non-profit organization, and another indication that its mission of offering theatre experiences tailored to teenagers has national value.

The \$49,336 grant and the validation it represents, both part of the annual HHS Compassion Capital Fund (CCF) announced last October, come as the company embarks on the largest expansion in its history.

“We were notified last fall that the grant would be coming,” said Phantom Projects Producing Artistic Director Steve Cisneros, who founded the company in 1996 at the age of 17, “but we have held off announcing it until the money was in the bank. Now we are accelerating the growth that began in 2006 thanks to a near doubling of support from the City of La Mirada.”

CCF grants totaling \$58 million are given in three categories, with Phantom Projects’ grant part of the Targeted Capacity Building Program for At-Risk Youth. Its more-than \$15 million, given to “310 faith-based and community organizations,” is focused on “at-risk youth, homeless persons, rural communities and strengthening marriage.”

With these additional funds, Phantom Projects will deepen its work with at-risk youth by creating new message-based education dramas for middle and high school youth, and continue its emphasis on teen casts that further engage the target audience. The grant allocates money for organizational development through additional staff, consultants and education.

Strengthening management and fund-raising strategies and the skills to pursue them will allow Cisneros to build the current board of directors. He has already hired outside professionals to improve the company’s execution of financial audits and public relations as well as volunteer

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management of more than 50 cast members and 75 volunteers, who annually donate more than 2,000 hours.

As was announced in 2006, the annual support from the City of La Mirada nearly doubled for the current season. The Council, which has helped nurture the company from a first year budget of \$2000 to a current annual budget of more than \$100,000, contributed \$38,300 in underwriting to the 2006-07 Season.

In addition to the doubling of funding from the City of La Mirada, the Council helped secure a home for the theatre company. The 5,000-square-foot warehouse near the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts includes office, production and rehearsal space as well as storage for sets and costumes.

“In fact,” said Cisneros, “the facility came with a surprise bonus. The previous tenant, Golden State Theatre, left a treasure of set pieces and costumes that we inherited and can use in future productions.”

“It’s our responsibility to do two things,” Councilwoman Susan Tripp told a reporter. “We must support healthy families and positive alternatives for youth, and really invest in quality theater. We have to cast a broader net if we’re going to be successful with the youth as a whole.”

But these gifts have allowed expansion of more than the working environment and personnel. A fourth production was added to the 2006-07 Season. In past years the company mounted three productions at the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts. These include interpretations of classic work currently on school curricula as well as one original script, by La Mirada High School teacher (and Cisneros’ founding mentor) Bruce Gevirtzman, that addresses issues of immediate concern to teenagers. On July 21, The Young Artists Workshop will offer an evening of one-acts written, directed and starring some of Southern California’s brightest young talents.

The 2006-07 Season includes an adaptation of Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, opening February 27 at the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts, *Through These Eyes*, a new play about self-image and specifically eating disorders coming May 23, and the Artists Workshop in July. The first production of the season, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, a play about the children of the Holocaust, ran in November 2006.

For info on the web, visit: [www.PhantomProjects.com](http://www.PhantomProjects.com).

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