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SAINT JOSEPH BALLET CHANGES NAME TO “THE WOODEN FLOOR”

SANTA ANA, Calif., Oct. 22, 2009 - At an event attended by community supporters and sponsored by The Boeing Company, Saint Joseph Ballet announced today that the organization has officially changed its name to The Wooden Floor, with the tagline, “From here you can step anywhere.” The mission of the 26-year-old organization remains: To empower low-income youth from diverse backgrounds to strengthen self-esteem, self-discipline and a sense of accomplishment through dance, academic and family programs.

The Board of Directors and Founder Beth Burns have considered renaming the organization for many years since its evolution from a ballet pilot project for underserved youth at its founding to a multi-faceted dance-based organization with a comprehensive focus on youth development through intensive academic, pre-collegiate and family service programs.

The formal process began in 2005 when the organization’s long-range strategic plan called for an in-depth assessment of the way it was perceived by its constituents and the public. With the help of capacity building grants from The James Irvine Foundation and the Weingart Foundation, extensive market research was conducted involving a broad range of stakeholders including board members, long-time donors, families, alumni and community leaders. As a result, a strong recommendation emerged for a name change to support the effective communication about the scope and successful outcomes of the organization. This furthers the organization’s strategic goals to increase support and reach new audiences, as well as advocate for its youth development model.

Responding to how the new name was chosen, Executive and Artistic Director Melanie Ríos Glaser said, “The Wooden Floor’ is a metaphor for the strong foundation thousands of very low-income youth receive through our programs. It honors their connection to the dance floor where, through daily practice, they become more self-aware, confident and disciplined. Each day, the wooden floor beneath their feet supports them as they journey toward brighter futures.”

The Wooden Floor’s Chairman of the Board, Damien Jordan, stated, “The new name is a result of an exhaustive effort to analyze the way we engage the community, both locally and nationally. This is an exciting milestone that allows us to broaden and deepen the public’s understanding of how we impact the lives of the youth we serve and sets the stage for the organization to grow, while staying true to its mission.”

“Boeing is proud to continue its 26-year history of support for the work of this organization by assisting with the launch of the new name,” said Fernando Vivanco, Boeing representative and board member of The Wooden Floor. “The change will better position the organization to broaden its strong base of supporters. While dance education is the core transformational vehicle utilized by the organization, critical academic and family service elements help provide a holistic foundation for the low-income youth The Wooden Floor serves every year.”

While planning forward, the organization affirms that the name “Saint Joseph Ballet” remains a source of tremendous pride as it reflects the organization’s beginnings with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange. “We will always cherish our history with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange and be grateful for the long-time support of members of the St. Joseph Health System,” said Ms. Ríos Glaser.

About The Wooden Floor

The Wooden Floor in Santa Ana, previously known as Saint Joseph Ballet, is an after-school organization that for 26 years has promised hope and opportunity to nearly 400 low-income youth annually. Dance education and performance are the core transformational elements through which youth change the way they think about themselves and develop the ability to reach their full potential. In the dance studio, rigorous training, creativity and self-knowledge lead to confidence, leadership, teamwork, well-being and joy. Academic programs, pre-collegiate mentoring and college scholarships ensure that our students succeed in school and are college ready. Since 2005, 100 percent of graduates from The Wooden Floor have enrolled in college, exceeding the national average for their peers threefold. Family Services at The Wooden Floor—counseling, crisis intervention and social service referrals—help families overcome hardships and navigate challenges. Community support enables these year-round programs to be offered free of charge. Bringing about generational change to break the cycle of poverty in our community is the long-term goal of The Wooden Floor.

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