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# *Center for Puppetry Arts introduces Healthy Choices Puppetry Program for Hispanic Youth*

The Home Depot Foundation’s Building Community Network funds program

*Breaking cultural barriers, building a healthier community*

**ATLANTA (February 8, 2018)** – The **Center for Puppetry Arts**’ award-winning Distance Learning department and the **Hispanic Health Coalition of Georgia** **(HHCGA)** are teaming up in a strategic partnership to develop a new interactive program to educate and empower Hispanic and Latino communities in Georgia with the knowledge and tools they need to prevent chronic diseases and to live longer, healthier lives.

Sponsored by **The Home Depot Foundation’s Building Community Network**, the ***Healthy Choices Puppetry Program for Hispanic Youth*** will leverage the artistic talents, technical resources and digital reach of the Center for Puppetry Arts’ Distance Learning programming with the cultural knowledge and expertise of the HHCGA to improve the well-being of the Hispanic/Latino community of Georgia.

HHCGA, a more than 28-year-old non-profit, is Georgia’s only statewide organization focused on Hispanic/Latino chronic disease prevention and better health outcomes. It identifies needs and service gaps leading to health disparities for Georgia Hispanics and offers direct community services and supportive activities to improve the health of Georgia Latinos. As an expert in community health promotion, education, policy and health advocacy, HHCGA creates high quality, culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate health care and prevention services for their community.

“All communities have their own unique challenges around wellness. Ours include the rising rates of diabetes, Types I and Types II in adults and youth, largely manifested by poor dietary choices and increasingly sedentary lifestyles. We wanted to find a creative, engaging and educational medium to combat these issues, so we reached out to the Center for Puppetry Arts,” said Shirley E. Borghi, Executive Director & Co-Vice Chairman of the Hispanic Health Coalition of Georgia.

The Distance Learning program is the Center for Puppetry Arts’ digital programming platform, bringing curriculum-based workshops and puppet performances to every state in the U.S. and to countries all around the world. The department currently offers a variety of programming related to health, nutrition and safety to schools and community groups. According to Distance Learning Director Sara Burmenko, “Technology now makes it easier than ever to bring our programming directly into communities, connecting to schools and other community organizations…really anywhere that has an internet connection. The platform we use also allows us to connect to multiple schools and communities for one program.”

Using the art of puppetry, the Center skillfully uses performances and workshops to educate and enlighten people about serious issues of health and lifestyle in ways that are fun and accessible. The partnership with HHCGA will ensure that the content for *Healthy Choices Puppetry Program for Hispanic Youth* will be culturally relevant and targeted for maximum impact. The goal is to help Hispanic Youth living in the metro Atlanta area become more comfortable with healthy habits such as practicing hygiene, choosing healthy meals, and exercising.

“We know it’s hard to get young people to do some of the things they need to do. But if we can make it fun, engaging and interactive, we increase our chances of helping them make the lifestyle changes they need for a healthier life and increased sustainability.” said Borghi.

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The Center for Puppetry Arts is supported in part by: Fulton County Arts Council • City of Atlanta Mayor’s Office of Cultural Affairs • Georgia Council for the Arts • The Zeist Foundation • The Jim Henson Company

For a complete list of the Center’s major supporters visit [www.puppet.org/about/sponsors](http://www.puppet.org/about/sponsors).

*Center for Puppetry Arts® is a unique cultural treasure – a magical place where children and adults are educated, enlightened, and entertained. Since 1978 the Center has introduced millions of visitors to the wonder and art of puppetry and has touched the lives of many through enchanting performances, curriculum-based workshops, and the hands-on Museum as well as Distance Learning and Outreach programs. Center for Puppetry Arts is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization and is supported in part by contributions from corporations, foundations, government agencies, and individuals. Major funding is provided by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners and the City of Atlanta Mayor’s Office of Cultural Affairs. These programs are also supported in part by the Georgia Council for the Arts through the appropriations of the Georgia General Assembly. GCA is a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts. The Center is a member of Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA/USA/ASSITEJ).The Center also serves as headquarters of UNIMA-USA, the American branch of Union Internationale de la Marionnette, the international puppetry organization.*