

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

Molly Smith Artistic Director Edgar Dobie Executive Producer Zelda Fichandler Founding Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MARTHA'S TABLE AND ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER  
ANNOUNCE SEASON-LONG YOUTH LITERACY COLLABORATION AND BOOK DRIVE  
*MARTHA'S TABLE FEEDS THE MIND***

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage Executive Producer Edgar Dobie together with Martha's Table President & CEO Patty Stonesifer announce ***Martha's Table Feeds The Mind***—an innovative collaboration to bring the love of language and joy of reading to District families facing economic challenges through a cross-organization book drive. By engaging its patrons throughout the [2015/16 season](#), Arena Stage seeks to collect at least 2,400 books to build home libraries for about 200 children served through Martha's Table's Healthy Start program.

**Arena Stage will have a book collection receptacle located just inside the main entrance at Visitor Services at the Mead Center for American Theater (1101 Sixth St., SW, D.C.), beginning September 11**, when the season officially gets underway with the world premiere of *Destiny of Desire*, written by Washington playwright Karen Zacarias.

The theater will accept donations and will also have a selection of early childhood through elementary school-aged books for sale at Visitor Services, in the event patrons would like to purchase one to donate onsite for \$5-\$13.

"The Arena family is excited to add our creativity to Martha's Table's goal of feeding the body as well as children's minds through this season-long initiative promoting youth literacy," comments **Dobie**. "Both readers and theater audiences open their minds to new ideas through storytelling, so there is a perfect synergy in this collaboration. In addition to our family-friendly programming this year, we are eager to harness our own education and community engagement programs, such as Moving Stories, to support this meaningful initiative."

"We at Martha's Table are thrilled that the leadership and—by extension—the patrons of Arena Stage share our belief in the power of words and stories to bring joy and meaning to even the youngest reader," adds **Tiffany Williams**, Director of Healthy Start at Martha's Table. "Through this new partnership, we are able to create a literary bridge—one we hope strengthens our shared sense of community as well as the shared love of a well-told story—between the Arena audience and the children and families who will be enriched by this partnership. We are grateful that Arena Stage is standing with us as we work to improve literacy skills and help children embrace the joy of reading."

As a celebration of this partnership and literature's direct link to theater, Arena Stage will host a special one-day-only event in November that will feature artists from the theater's upcoming family-friendly productions of *Akeelah and the Bee* and *Oliver!*, as well as Arena Stage teaching artists who will use Arena Stage's literacy program **Moving Stories** to create a unique field trip opportunity for D.C. Public School and Healthy Start program students at the Mead Center. More details to be announced at a later date.

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Taught by highly-trained Arena Stage teaching artists, [Moving Stories](#) is a vibrant and interactive experience designed for preschool and early-elementary aged students that brings stories to life in the classroom. Using song, movement, sign language and storytelling, Moving Stories explores a beloved children's book through creative drama and promotes literacy skills, such as increased vocabulary and reading comprehension, while forming personal connections to stories and encouraging imagination, problem solving and teamwork. Moving Stories is generously sponsored by the Nora Roberts Foundation.

**Martha's Table** is a 35-year-old Washington, D.C.-based non-profit that works to increase access to education, food and opportunity, with the goal of supporting stronger children, stronger families and stronger community. Martha's Table programming is organized into three initiatives: Healthy Start, Healthy Eating, and Healthy Connections. [marthastable.org](http://marthastable.org)

**Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater**, under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Producer Edgar Dobie, is a national center dedicated to American voices and artists. Arena Stage produces plays of all that is passionate, profound, deep and dangerous in the American spirit, and presents diverse and ground-breaking work from some of the best artists around the country. Arena Stage is committed to commissioning and developing new plays through the American Voices New Play Institute. Arena Stage impacts the lives of over 10,000 students annually through its work in community engagement. Now in its seventh decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. [arenastage.org](http://arenastage.org)

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Martha's Table

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