

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Greta Hays
press@arenastage.org, 202-600-4056

September 29, 2016

**MARTHA'S TABLE AND ARENA STAGE AT THE MEAD CENTER FOR AMERICAN THEATER
CONTINUE SEASON-LONG YOUTH LITERACY COLLABORATION AND BOOK DRIVE
MARTHA'S TABLE FEEDS THE MIND
FOLLOWING SUCCESS OF LAST SEASON'S COLLECTION OF NEARLY 2,500 BOOKS**

(Washington, D.C.) Martha's Table President & CEO Patty Stonesifer and Arena Stage Executive Director Edgar Dobie are pleased to announce the book drive and youth literacy initiative *Martha's Table Feeds The Mind* will continue into the 2016/17 season. The collaboration aims to bring the love of language and joy of reading to District children and families through a cross-organization book drive. During the inaugural partnership last season, patrons of Arena Stage donated 2,477 children's books to the families of Martha's Table students.

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.), for all productions during the 2016/17 Season.

The theater will accept donations of gently used books 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.

"Arena Stage has long had a commitment to serving the youth in our community through programs such as Living Stage and our ongoing, meaningful initiatives Moving Stories and Voices of Now, but we have been so humbled and delighted to see the outpouring of support from our patrons to support this new collaboration with Martha's Table," shares **Dobie**. "Storytelling is powerful and essential in the development of creative thinking in young minds, and we're very proud to help Martha's Table with this investment for their students and families."

"Last year, Martha's Table and Arena Stage began a partnership to create a literary bridge between the theater, its patrons and the children and families of Martha's Table, which resulted in the creation of about 200 mini home libraries for our infant, toddler and elementary-aged children," adds **Tiffany Williams**, director of Healthy Start at Martha's Table. "We are so grateful to continue this partnership into Arena Stage's new season, allowing patrons to continue to stand with us as we work to improve literacy skills and help children embrace the joy of reading."

—continued—

Page 2—Continued Martha’s Table partnership announced

In addition to the book drive, Arena Stage staff and artists will partner with Martha’s Table in various ways throughout the year, including story times and a Moving Stories workshop with the Healthy Start students, as well as serving through one of Martha’s Table’s volunteer opportunities, such as food preparation in the organization’s Healthy Start Eating Program.

To view a gallery of images from last season’s Read & Play Storytelling Day, featuring a visit of more than 300 preschool-aged students to Arena Stage for immersive storytelling workshop with actors from *Oliver!* and *Akeelah and the Bee*, as well as a special performance from *Oliver!*, visit:

[facebook.com/arenastage/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10153984672082638](https://www.facebook.com/arenastage/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10153984672082638)

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 has worked to support stronger children, stronger families, and stronger communities by increasing access to quality education, healthy food, and family supports in Washington, DC for over 35 years. Martha’s Table’s Healthy Eating program operates 35+ free pop-up grocery markets across the city, and its Healthy Start and Healthy Connections programs offer premier early childhood education and older youth programming. In addition, the organization runs emergency support programs, including McKenna’s Wagon, a daily mobile food truck that serves hundreds of meals to homeless and hungry residents every night; a daily emergency mini market, open 7 days a week; and two affordable thrift stores, Martha’s Outfitters, which offer a no-cost shopping program for neighbors in need. marthastable.org

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Director 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. 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

###

