



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chance Theater

Casey Long, Founding Artist

(714) 900-3284 or casey@chancetheater.com

Orange County Asperger's Support Group

ocasupport@gmail.com

<http://www.ocaspergers.org/>

**Chance Theater and Orange County Asperger's Support Group
are Teaming Up to present a new Summer Education Program...**

Spectrum 'Speak Up' Series

**High-functioning students on the Autism Spectrum will work together this summer
to present an original piece of theater and find their voice**

Anaheim, CA | February 15, 2018 ... The Orange County Asperger's Support Group (OCASG) and Chance Theater will be working together this summer to present the new Spectrum 'Speak Up' Series. The program is specifically designed for teens that have been diagnosed with high functioning Autism, Asperger's, or PDD-NOS.

For over a decade, Chance Theater has worked with local junior high and high school students to "speak up" about their lives and experiences in the 'Speak Up – Take a Chance' summer program. Through story circles, improv games, and writing exercises, students learn the fundamentals of storytelling, have a ton of fun, and find their voice. Over five weeks, they work collaboratively with their peers to write, design, and perform a new play that highlights special moments in their lives.

Through this partnership, OCASG and Chance Theater will work to modify the 'Speak Up' program for teens who have been diagnosed with high functioning Autism, Asperger's or PDD-NOS. To assist, OCASG and the Chance Theater have enlisted Dr. Asha Bhakta, president of Creative Solutions for Hope, a services organization who apply the principles and methodologies of applied behavior analysis (ABA) to create individualized instruction and "programming" geared to benefit children with developmental disabilities such as Autism Spectrum disorder and ADHD.

"OCASG is thrilled to be working with the Chance," said Judi Uttal, president of OCASG. "Teens who have been diagnosed with ASD struggle with bullying and establishing their identity during their high school years because of their social and communication deficiencies. We think that the Spectrum 'Speak Up' Program will give these individuals an opportunity to develop confidence, enhance their communication skills, and develop friendships by leveraging theater techniques."

“We believe that theater can change lives,” said Founding Artist Casey Long. “We are grateful to OCASG for the opportunity to expand our ‘Speak Up’ program to an overlooked segment of our community, and aid in developing the skill of self-expression for students on the Autism spectrum. We have seen again and again with teenagers and veterans the personal impact that is possible when you give someone a voice and a stage to speak up about their experiences. Theater is a powerful tool in realizing the potential of living a more fully rounded life by developing skills in problem solving, critical and creative thinking, and dealing with ambiguity and complexity. We can’t wait to get started and see what they have to say.”

OCASG and Chance Theater will jointly fund the five-week program. As part of the fundraising efforts, Chance Theater will donate up to 30% of tickets purchased for upcoming performances of James and The Giant Peach at their theater, when individuals provide a specific code. To purchase tickets, visit www.ChanceTheater.com/Peach.

Interested parties may register for additional information at www.memberplanet.com/s/ocasg/chance-speak-up-2018.

To make a donation to OCASG, visit <https://goo.gl/kT8siH>.

To make a donation to Chance Theater, visit www.ChanceTheater.com/donate.

ABOUT CHANCE THEATER

Proud to be one of the leading ensemble-driven theatre companies in Southern California, CHANCE THEATER recently received a National Theatre Company grant from American Theatre Wing. The Chance has won six Ovation Awards, including two for Best Production of a Musical – Intimate Theater for its West Coast premiere of *Triassic Park – The Musical* and Southern California premiere of *Jerry Springer – The Opera*, as well as four LADCC Awards, including the Polly Warfield Award for Outstanding Season. The Anaheim City Council named Chance Theater “the official resident theater company of Anaheim”, and Arts Orange County has twice named the Chance as “Outstanding Arts Organization”. Known for using bold and personal storytelling to promote dialogue and connection within the Southern California theatrical landscape, the Chance is committed to contributing to a more compassionate, connected and creative community. As a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group, Network of Ensemble Theaters, and the LA Stage Alliance, Chance Theater continues to bring national attention to the Southern California and Orange County theater scenes.

ABOUT THE ORANGE COUNTY ASPERGER’S SUPPORT GROUP (OCASG)

OCASG was founded in 2003 by parents seeking to provide support for local families and adults dealing with Asperger’s. The organization has grown to over 1000 member families throughout Orange County, and now also includes families affected by High-Functioning Autism (HFA) and Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD-NOS). Monthly support group meetings for individuals and family members are held in Newport Beach and Placentia, often with guest speakers. Monthly social activities encourage social integration. An online discussion board allows members to ask questions and share information. The Orange County Asperger's Support Group is a nonprofit, tax exempt 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Visit OCASG online at www.ocaspergers.org

###