



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chance Theater

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**Chance Theater and Orange County Asperger's Support Group
are Teaming Up again to present the Summer Outreach Program...**

Spectrum Speak Up

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

Anaheim, CA | April 22, 2019 ... The Orange County Asperger's Support Group (OCASG) and Chance Theater will be working together again this summer to present the **Spectrum Speak Up** outreach program. The workshops will be twice a week, from June 25 through July 25, 2019, culminating in two performances on Saturday, August 3 at 11am & 4pm at the Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center on the Fyda-Mar Stage.

Last year, the Chance and OCASG worked together to present the first **Spectrum Speak Up**, an expansion on Chance Theater's "Speak Up" outreach program that had served at-risk teens and local veterans for over 15 years. This new program was crafted specifically for teens who have been diagnosed with high functioning Autism, Asperger's or PDD-NOS. During the course of the five-week program, students created new connections, learned the fundamentals of storytelling, had fun, expressed themselves, and created and performed in an original play!

"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."

"Spectrum Speak Up provides a safe place for these students to explore creativity while giving them the tools they need for self-expression and empowering them to embrace what makes them special," said Chance Theater Education Director **Karen O'Hanlon**, who also runs the summer program. "Another happy result of this program is it addresses the incredible need for these students to be around other kids like themselves. A majority are homeschooled and it was wonderful to see the friendships and bonds develop between the students. It emboldened them to share their stories and experiences. They truly knew that that had an opportunity to share their experience and create."

Since the 2018 program, Spectrum students have continued to be a part of the Chance by hosting the Relaxed Performances of both *A Charlie Brown Christmas* and *James and The Giant Peach*. Their hosting duties included ushering, giving the curtain speech, facilitating an activity in the lobby, and assisting with the post event. “This served as an inspiration to parents of young children on the Spectrum by seeing our teen leaders and the community we have built for them,” said O’Hanlon. “They have continued to speak out at our gala and board meetings, and just performed at Chance-a-thon 2019.”

ABOUT CHANCE THEATER

Proud to be one of the leading ensemble-driven theatre companies in Southern California, CHANCE THEATER has received the National Theatre Company grant from American Theatre Wing for “nurturing a community of artists in ways that strengthen and demonstrate the quality, diversity, and dynamism of American theatre.” 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” in 2014, 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, Orange County Theatre Guild, and 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

MORE INFORMATION

WHAT: SPECTRUM SPEAK UP

The Orange County Asperger's Support Group (OCASG) and Chance Theater are working together to present the new Spectrum 'Speak Up' Series crafted specifically for teens who have been diagnosed with high functioning Autism, Asperger's or PDD-NOS. During the course of the five-week program, students will create new connections, learn the fundamentals of storytelling, have fun, express themselves, and create and perform in an original play!

WORKSHOPS: June 25 - July 25, 2019

Tuesdays & Thursdays: 10:00am - 3:00pm

REHEARSALS: July 29 - August 3, 2019

Monday - Friday: 10:00am - 3:00pm

PERFORMANCES: August 3, 2019

11:00am and 4:00pm

WHERE: Chance Theater @ Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center on the Fyda-Mar Stage.
5522 E. La Palma Ave., Anaheim, CA 92807

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