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CONTACT: Theresa Woehrel

PHONE: 716.881.0917 **EMAIL:** theresa@yawny.org

YOUNG AUDIENCES CELEBRATES RHYTHM WITH HERITAGE CENTERS

BUFFALO, NY (7/01/10) – Young Audiences of Western New York recently completed a year full of satisfying achievements with students who participated in the *A Rhythm Runs Through It* residency at Heritage Centers After School Program.

A Rhythm Runs Through It is a long-term arts integration program incorporating dance, music, and visual arts for young people with special needs that attend the Heritage Centers After School Program. Youth who participate in the program have moderate to severe development disabilities, many of which also face physical, mental, cognitive, or behavioral challenges.

Throughout the residency, rhythm is used as a unifying element for workshops lead by Young Audiences of WNY teaching artists Sarah Hooper, Miriam Minkoff and Jen Russo. The program uses the arts to apply the findings of current research on how kinesthetic activities enhance brain development, physical and mental coordination, and language processing. Additionally, the residency introduces a beneficial partnership between an arts organization like Young Audiences of Western New York and a human service agency such as Heritage Centers.

In 2010, one of Young Audiences WNY's largest goals of the partnership with Heritage Centers was to increase staff involvement in the residency by demonstrating how the arts can be used in their programming to reach students with special needs.

"This year, the Heritage Centers staff have truly taken ownership of their role as partners to our artists," said Sunnylee Mowery, Arts and Education Director for Young Audiences WNY. "The staff have the unique experience of working with the students on a daily basis. They are extremely familiar with the various challenges each student faces and are integral to modeling the positive, participatory attitude required to get the students to truly engage with each workshop."

Positive results were apparent when five student participants in the *A Rhythm Runs Through It* residency attended the Young Audiences WNY Arts Abilities conference on May 11 to assist in the presentation of a workshop detailing the successful model of the residency for local educators. "The comfort and pride the students experienced through dance and drumming was obvious as each student voluntarily showed the audience the moves and songs they had mastered through work with the artists," said Mowery.

A Rhythm Runs Through It was created by Young Audiences WNY and is funded by The Children's Guild Foundation. Individuals interested in learning more about this residency can visit www.yawny.org or contact Young Audiences WNY directly at 716.881.0917

ABOUT YOUNG AUDIENCES: Founded in 1962, Young Audiences WNY programming is designed around the fact that an arts-rich education provides a child with the ability to look beyond facts and figures; to creatively meet new challenges as they arise. Plus, the arts make learning fun. Introducing curriculum-supportive, arts-based learning provides a varied and compelling environment—engage even the most reluctant learners and give day-dreamers a classroom as rich as their imagination.

ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S GUILD FOUNDATION: Incorporated in 1910, The Children's Guild Foundation funds non-profit organizations within the eight counties of Western New York that provide programs and services for special needs children in the areas of healthcare, research, education and therapeutic recreation. The Foundation also seeks to effect change, provide opportunities, and promote inclusion & diversity for children with special needs and their families by advocating on their behalf. The research initiatives funded by The Foundation are concentrated in the area of pediatric developmental disabilities. For more information, visit www.thechildrensguild.org or call 716-362-9650.