



Young Audiences Western New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Conference Focuses on Serving Youth at Risk of Educational Failure

Registration Now Open for Young Audiences Annual Arts Abilities Conference

BUFFALO, NY (3/31/10) – Young Audiences of Western New York has opened registration for *Breaking Down Barriers*, its fourth annual Patricia Cotsen Arts Abilities Conference. This year's conference will be hosted at Babeville's Asbury Hall on May 11, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Additional activities and events will be hosted throughout the day at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center and Starlight Studio.

Young Audiences WNY created the conference as a professional development opportunity for educators, administrators, artists, human service workers, and parents to learn about using the arts to educate young people who are at the highest risk of educational failure.

"The conference is about nourishing educational growth in young people with special-needs or who are at-risk of not succeeding through traditional educational environments through experiences in the arts", said Cynnie Gaasch, Executive Director of Young Audiences WNY. "Making the arts accessible to all students is one of Young Audiences' key goals."

Interactive workshops in slam poetry, visual art, theatre, dance, and music will be offered throughout the day. The workshops exemplify successes and explore opportunities for working with young people with disabilities, those with special needs, immigrant and refugee communities, incarcerated youth, and others at risk of educational failure. This year's workshops will be presented by 16 leaders in the field, including featured presentations by Gayle Danley, Dale Davis, and Gordon Sasaki.

Gayle Danley: Named the 2006 Young Audiences National Artist of the Year, Danley's explosive style combines movement and emotion as she addresses and explores contemporary issues. An international Slam Poet champion, Danley maintains a constant touring schedule of motivational speaking, college performances, and educational workshops. Gayle performs her award winning slam poetry at a midday presentation at the conference.

Dale Davis: Davis, founder and Executive Director of The New York State Literary Center, has edited and published over six hundred books and anthologies of the writing of young people. She is also Executive Director of the Association of Teaching Artists, and a member of the New York State Arts in Correctional Education Network. Her work currently concentrates on writing hip hop tunes with incarcerated youth.

Gordon Sasaki: Sasaki currently teaches in the community and access programs of the education department at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, which aim to bring art experiences to the disabled and underserved. He has been a wheelchair user since a 1982 automobile accident. At the Buffalo Conference, he explores the application of Universal Design in the classroom.

Registration and additional information are available online at www.yawny.org. The conference attendance fee is \$40 per person, with discounted \$20 tickets available to college students and \$25 tickets available to teaching artists. Individuals interested in volunteering at this event should contact Theresa Woehrel at 716.881.0917 or by email at Theresa@yawny.org.

In 2010, Young Audiences is pleased to rename the Annual Arts Abilities Conference to

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honor Patricia Cotsen for her service to Young Audiences and other institutions in Western New York. Ms. Cotsen was a member of Young Audiences' board of directors for 18 years.

The Patricia Cotsen Arts Abilities Conference is presented in collaboration with New York State Alliance for Arts Education, New York State Arts in Correctional Education Network, Starlight Studio, and VSA Arts, at The Church and Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center at Babeville, and Starlight Studio. Support has been provided by New York State Council on the Arts, New York State Alliance for Arts Education, and New York State Arts in Correctional Education Network.

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.