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MetLife Foundation and Theatre Communications Group Announce Second Round Recipients of the *A-ha! Program: Think It, Do It*

A-ha! Program Recognizes Innovation and Creativity in the Theatres

New York—October 8, 2009—MetLife Foundation and Theatre Communications Group (TCG) announce the second round of recipients for the *A-ha! Program: Think it, Do It*, which encourages TCG members to think and act creatively. Five theatres were awarded grants, totaling \$150,000, to either research and develop new production ideas or experiment and implement innovative concepts in the theatrical field.

Innovation and creativity are fundamental tools for the advancement of any initiative or discipline, and this is especially true in the arts. Unfortunately, support for new ideas and experimentation for theatre practitioners has not been readily available. To fill that void in the professional, not-for-profit theatre field, MetLife Foundation and TCG partnered last year to create the *A-ha! Program*, which fosters creative thinking and action among TCG member theatres.

“MetLife Foundation is giving our field an important opportunity to support risk regardless of the outcome because often we learn as much, if not more, from our failures as our successes,” said Teresa Eyring, TCG’s executive director. “In this time of economic instability and changing demographics, it is vital for theatres to seek new ways to create work that not only informs but strengthens bonds among diverse communities.”

The *A-ha! Program* has two components: *Think It* grants (up to \$25,000), which give theatre professionals the time and space for research and development and *Do It* grants (up to \$50,000), which support the implementation and testing of new ideas. The program aims to discover best practices that can benefit the field by supporting risk-taking, reflection, experimentation and the development of creative strategies in theatres.

“MetLife Foundation is proud to partner with TCG to support new ideas, creative thinking and innovation in theatres,” said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. “We believe the *A-ha! Program* will strengthen the field, be a catalyst for new models and promote best practices.”

The 2009 A-ha! *Do It* recipient is **Clubbed Thumb**, New York, N.Y. – It will partner with a larger theatre for co-curation and co-production that will be presented at the TCG’s annual conference in June and then in a longer run at the larger theater. Interested theaters should contact Clubbed Thumb.

The 2009 A-ha! *Think It* recipients are:

- **East West Players** (Los Angeles, Calif.) will develop an artist talent agency and diversity advocacy prototype.
- **Childsplay, Inc.** (Tempe, Ariz.) will convene experts from theatre design, manufacturing, recycling and sustainability to explore strategies for implementing green initiatives in stagecraft.
- **Book-It Repertory Theatre** (Seattle, Wa.) will investigate the feasibility of a long-term partnership between Book-It and other non-profits to create a literacy-based theatre arts complex.
- **Salvage Vanguard Theater** (Austin, Texas.) will develop and test a business plan for a production element co-op for small to mid-size companies in the Austin theater community.

The process and progress of these recipients will be chronicled on the TCG website, www.tcg.org, and the A-ha! blog, aha.tcg.org.

MetLife Foundation was established by MetLife to continue the company's long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation supports programs that improve education, promote health, encourage parental involvement and family engagement, and help revitalize neighborhoods and stress accessibility and inclusion. In recent years, a focus on Alzheimer's and aging issues has been added. MetLife Foundation stresses education in all its programs. Recognizing the vital role the arts play in building communities and educating young people, the Foundation contributes to arts and cultural organizations across the United States, with an emphasis on increasing opportunities for young people, reaching broad audiences through inclusive programming, and making arts more accessible for all people.

Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, exists to strengthen, nurture and promote the professional not-for-profit American theatre. Its programs serve nearly 700 member theatres and affiliate organizations and more than 12,000 individuals nationwide. As the US Center of the International Theatre Institute, TCG connects its constituents to the global theatre community. TCG is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. www.tcg.org.

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