



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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Educating, Healing & Unifying through the Arts  
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### **Free Performances: Magical Book Leaps From the Page to the Stage**

Katy, Texas (December 12, 2007) - "Reach out and grasp a handful of magic," instructed Kristin Miller, Executive Director of the Katy Visual & Performing Arts Center (KVPAC), as she warmed up the audience for a professional theatre presentation of, *The Ballerina With Webbed Feet*. "Now, when I count to three, let's release our magic and bring this book to life!" encouraged Miller. And with a little imagination and an enthusiastic 1,2,3, the book did indeed leap from the page to the stage entertaining the audience, both young and old alike with a stunning performance. Admission was free-of-charge, compliments of Katy Parent Magazine, who sponsored the event as a gift to the community.

Based on the children's book of the same title by author Pam Van Scoyoc, the play's message is whimsical, endearing and stars Pattie Patty, a duck determined to dance like a ballerina, despite her awkward feet and constant ridicule from her neighboring geese. Pattie persists and learns it doesn't take a pink tutu, ballet slippers or a sparkly tiara to fulfill her dreams. It takes the support of her friends to be successful, who ironically find they are hording dreams of dancing grandeur as well. From a two-stepping frog, to a gaggle of geese tango to a hip-hopping pig, the comic musical action from the barnyard setting is non-stop.

The cast includes Jessica Pettey as Pattie Patty; Phil Pettey in dual roles as Dog and Horse; Sarah Scholl as Sergeant Gab; Donna Wheaton as Mille; Chad Gonzales as Don Juan Fernando Philippe (aka the Frog); James Kennedy as Private Honk; Lisa Burt as Charlotte and Elizabeth Scholl as Gillie. *Ballerina* is directed by Fleurette Fernando, the KVPAC Performing Arts Director and an adjunct professor of theatre arts at University of Houston Downtown.

*Ballerina* is part of a unique 3-hour educational field trip to KVPAC, Books Alive! Literacy through the Arts. During a field trip, the play is normally followed by three academic workshops for students ages 3-8. By the time the program finishes its run in January, more than 1,800 children will have participated in Books Alive! "The program is awesome," Special Education Department Chairperson for Red Elementary, Elizabeth Shields commented. "I love the way the performers interact with children of all ages. My special needs students were active participants and were involved in every activity. It is refreshing to visit a place where all kids are *special*..."

Audience size can range from 40-600/event based on student need and the size of the venue. In a few cases, the production is packed up, goes on the road off-site and is modified to accommodate student transportation limitations or for health reasons. This year Books Alive! has already been provided to or is booked at Shriners Childrens Hospital, Houston 5<sup>th</sup> Ward Head Start Center, Ronald McDonald House, Big Brothers and Big Sisters and Reach Out and Read. "The program goal is to institute a love  
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of books and reading to young children in a very creative way because literacy is the most effective gateway skill to help ensure future success in life” emphasizes Miller, “Books Alive! is provided free-of-charge to Head Start centers, Title I schools, qualified non-profit organizations & to the community because of generous grants from Houston Arts Alliance, Target Foundation and Wal-Mart Foundation.” Substantial tuition discounts are provided to public and private schools upon request. There are also grants available to schools to cover their transportation expenses.

The instructors in the academic workshops look familiar to the students as they go to class because they are the actors who just moments before, appeared on stage. Children enjoy the classes and think they are great fun not realizing there are serious cross-curriculum literacy objectives embedded in the lessons. Music class features an explanation of the play’s score that features a wide range of genres from classical to disco to hip-hop songs. The idea that music emits emotion and helps to convey meaning throughout a performance is highly emphasized. In the Visual Arts class, students make a project that is combined into a large collaborative piece of artwork. KVPAC professionally frames the piece and donates the artwork to the school. The Choreography/Stagecraft workshop gives the students a crash course in dancing, acting, characterization and working with props. Students end their field trip with a little performance of their own to show off their new found skills.

KVPAC adapts two books each school year into this unique field trip format. The next Books Alive! production is based on, *Don’t Eat The Bluebonnets* written by Ellen Leventhal and Ellen Rothberg and illustrated by Bill Megenhardt; all from the metropolitan Houston area. The play will be presented free-of-charge to the community courtesy of Katy Magazine, an event sponsor on Saturday, March 29, 2008 at the ARTS for ALL! Family Festival at La Centerra in Katy. It is not too soon for families to mark their calendars now and plan to join the literary adventure as Books Alive! once again leaps from the page to the stage. For more information or to book a spring Books Alive! field trip, contact Kristin Miller at 281-829-ARTS or [www.KVPAC.org](http://www.KVPAC.org)

## **IMAGES ATTACHED**

### **ABOUT KVPAC**

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, KVPAC annually serves more than 14,000 children, youth and adults through its community outreach programs, free ARTS for ALL! events and tuition-based workshops in Theater Arts, Visual Arts and Music. Funding comes from grants and donations from charitable foundations, local business and individuals. Contributors include: Houston Endowment Inc, National Endowment for the Arts, Houston Arts Alliance, Texas Commission on the Arts, Target Foundation, Wal-Mart Foundation and Katy Magazine. For more information, please visit our website: [www.KVPAC.org](http://www.KVPAC.org)

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