

Artbarn Grows Out Of The Box

Local Theater Company Encourages Brookline Students To "Get Out The Vote"

October 11, 2004 (Brookline, MA) -- This election season, one needn't look far for passionate messages about the importance of every vote. Whether it's MTV's public service announcements informing 18-24 year olds of their political influence, or reminders in the elder community of Florida's impact on the last election, "every vote counts" is the watchword of every community throughout the country. Brookline is no exception.

Artbarn Community Theater's *Out Of The Box Productions* has written and produced an original script designed to explore this very same issue of voter apathy. The lead character, through the experience of her nightmare, wrestles with the issue of her own indifference as well as that of her parents. The play will include an election in which the audience has an opportunity to vote and determine actual ending of the performance.

"We designed *Get Out The Vote* for children in grades K through 6 in the hope of communicating the importance of exercising the right and responsibility to vote," said Chloe Lara-Russack, the script's playwright and Program Director for Artbarn. "The lesson we hope to teach is that voting is the critical premise upon which our democratic system of government is based."

"The earlier we can start imbuing children with a sense of civic responsibility and with each citizen's ability to improve the world, one vote at a time, the better chance we have at actually achieving a better society someday," commented Susan Senator, member of the Brookline School Committee, author, and mother of three. "Children absorb our messages so easily; we need to take every opportunity to make those messages educational and positive."

A public performance is currently scheduled Friday, October 22nd from 3:30 to 4:4:30 in Hunneman Hall at the Brookline Public Library where Ms. Senator will participate in a "talk back," giving audience members the opportunity to ask questions about the real-life experience of one of Brookline's elected officials. In addition, the Artbarn troupes will be performing at several Brookline schools, including Heath, Devotion and Pierce as well as Jackson Mann in Allston and Mission Hill School in Boston. These in-school performances have been designed as an enhancement to current curriculum and include the dramatic presentation, Teacher Boxes with creative curriculum packets, and an Election Box to support a school-wide presidential election.

"In the last presidential election, 50% of Americans didn't vote; that's a staggering number," comments Borck. "We're hoping to use our creative, theatrical resources to teach children the importance of getting involved in their community and letting their voices be heard. With the election around the corner, the topic could not be more relevant."

About Artbarn Community Theater

Established in 1999, Artbarn Community Theater is a not-for-profit theater arts program for children from preschool through high school. Students at every age level are active participants in all aspects of the production experience. Artbarn is committed to providing a warm, nurturing and creative environment where children and youth can make friends, practice social skills and nurture a creative process they can use for the rest of their lives. More than 1,000 area children have participated in Artbarn programs during its first six years of operation.