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LEAGUE OF CHICAGO THEATRES' 2009 SHOWTIME GALA CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF CHICAGO THEATER WITH CELEBRITY HOST RUE McCLANAHAN **Evening to honor Chicago Shakespeare Theater, the side project, Marcelle McVay and Janet Davies**

CHICAGO – (April 6, 2009) – It will be a “golden” night as Emmy Award winner and Golden Girl, Rue McClanahan takes the stage at this year’s League of Chicago Theatres 30th Anniversary Showtime Gala. On **May 18, 2009** McClanahan will serve as the celebrity host and welcome guests to the Palmer House Hilton, 17 E. Monroe St, to pay tribute to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Marcelle McVay and Janet Davies for their roles in developing and supporting Chicago theater.

The evening begins at 5:30 p.m. as guests mingle with members of the Chicago theater community and have a chance to bid on live and silent auction items, including the centerpieces designed by local theater companies. The evening will continue with a gourmet dinner in the Empire Room, award presentations and performances by the cast of *Legally Blonde the Musical* and others. The League of Chicago Theatres will honor Chicago Shakespeare Theater with an Artistic Leadership Award, Marcelle McVay with the Lifetime Achievement Award, Janet Davies, host and executive producer of ABC 7s *190 North* will receive the Tribute Award for her continued support of Chicago theaters, and the third annual Broadway In Chicago Emerging Theater Award will be presented to *the side project*.

“We are thrilled to be celebrating 30 years of Chicago Theatre and talent. It’s an exciting time for the theatre community,” said Gala Chair Diana Martinez. “The work of these individuals and theatres inspire us all and continue to raise the bar for everyone. We are excited to honor such dedication and support.”

The Chicago Shakespeare Theater is an incredible institution that produces excellent re-imaginings of the Bard as well as entertaining family programming and provocative productions from around the globe. Marcelle McVay has been an inspiration to the entire Chicago community through her tireless work with Victory Gardens Theater. Janet Davies’ deep knowledge of and dedication to arts and culture in Chicago are legendary and her continued support brings Chicago Theater to countless viewers of her popular show.

This year *the side project* has been chosen as the recipient of the *Broadway In Chicago* Emerging Theater Award. Sponsored by Broadway In Chicago, the honoree will receive \$5,000 and a marketing support package. Broadway In Chicago has pledged \$25,000 over five years to encourage, support and promote young theaters in Chicago that have demonstrated great ability and promise. The honoree is selected from a group of finalists by a majority vote of the members of the League of Chicago Theatres.

The League of Chicago Theatres invites the Chicago community to attend this exciting and elegant 30th anniversary celebration of Chicago Theatre. Tickets are available for \$300 per person and all proceeds benefit The League of Chicago Theatres, which supports and promotes live theater in Chicago. To purchase tickets, or for sponsorship opportunities and participation information, visit ChicagoPlays.com or call 312-554-9800.

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The League of Chicago Theatres (LCT) is an alliance of theaters which leverages its collective strength to promote, support and advocate for Chicago's theater industry locally, nationally and internationally. The League of Chicago Theatres Foundation (LCTF) is dedicated to enhancing the art of theater in the Chicago area through audience development and support services for theaters and theater professionals.

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ABOUT THE LEAGUE OF CHICAGO THEATRES

Founded in 1979, the League is an alliance of theaters that leverages its collective strength to promote, support and advocate for Chicago's theater industry locally, nationally and internationally. Currently, the League serves a diverse membership of more than 195 theaters and theater companies, ranging from small storefront, non-union companies to major cultural centers with multi-million dollar facilities and productions.

RECIPIENT BIOS:

Janet Davies, Feature/Entertainment Reporter, ABC 7 Chicago, Host/Executive Producer, '190 North'

Janet Davies joined ABC 7 Chicago as a feature and entertainment reporter in August 1984. In addition to her feature segments, which appear on the ABC 7 News at 4 p.m. each Tuesday and Thursday, Davies is the host and executive producer of *190 North*, an Emmy award winning Chicago-based entertainment and lifestyle program. *190 North* airs on Sundays at 10:35 p.m. and is the top rated program in its time period. On July 26, 1998, *190 North* celebrated its 10th anniversary, making it the longest running magazine program in ABC 7 history.

As ABC 7's feature and entertainment reporter, Davies has covered local, national and international events, including the Academy Awards, the primetime Emmy Awards and International Fashion's Pret a Porter in Paris, France. Each year, she hosts ABC 7's live broadcast of *New Year's Eve Chicago Style* and co-hosts ABC 7's coverage of the Chicago Thanksgiving, Columbus Day, Southside Irish and Gay Pride Parades.

Davies came to ABC 7 from WPVI-TV in Philadelphia, Pa., which she co-hosted 'A.M. Philadelphia' from June 1981 to July 1984. In addition to her work as co-host, she co-produced, researched and wrote for the show. Previously, from October 1980 to April 1981, Davies hosted a half-hour magazine show, *Front Page Saturday Night*, at WBNS-TV in Columbus, Ohio.

From 1979 to 1980, Davies served as co-host and executive producer for *PM Magazine* at Cincinnati's WKRC-TV. Davies began her broadcasting career at WKRC in 1977 as their noon news anchor and general assignment reporter for *Eyewitness 12 News*.

Nominated for 51 regional Emmys, Davies has captured 11 awards for hosting, producing, writing and reporting. In addition, she won a Silver Dome Award from the Illinois Broadcasters Association for her work on *190 North* and her 1986 children's special on safety won an Iris Award from the National Association of Television Program Executives.

Davies serves on the Corporate Board of Director's for the Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago and is the co-host for the Hospital's annual *Children's Miracle Network Champions Broadcast*. She also works with the Leukemia Research Foundation, the Cradle, an adoption agency based in Evanston, Il. and PanCan, a pancreatic cancer organization. Davies was the recipient of the DaVinci Award for outstanding media from the Order Sons of Italy.

Born in Richmond, Virginia, Davies was raised in Cincinnati, Ohio. She earned a B.A. degree from Miami University in Ohio, where she majored in theater and minored in history. Davies, her husband and children reside on Chicago's North Side.

Marcelle McVay, outgoing Executive Director of Victory Gardens Theater

Marcelle McVay, outgoing Executive Director of Victory Gardens Theater will be honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Hired in 1974 as Victory Gardens' first and only full time employee, McVay has overseen the growth of Victory Gardens from its earliest storefront digs to the Greenhouse, the renovation of the Greenhouse and finally its latest move to the Biograph Theatre. Artistically McVay has facilitated the evolution of Victory Gardens into a Tony Award winning, nationally recognized center of new play development. During her tenure Victory Gardens has produced over 150 world premieres and championed the work of Chicago artists, by producing over 150 plays by Chicago playwrights. Victory Gardens has been a leader in fostering diverse artists and audiences, founding the first professional Latino Ensemble in Chicago and continuing to encourage and produce the work of artists in Chicago, particularly Chicago artists. McVay oversaw the access project, a program devoted to a barrier-free theater going experience for patrons with disabilities. She is a founding member of the League of Chicago Theatres.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater

The creative partnership of Chicago Shakespeare Theater's **Artistic Director Barbara Gaines** and **Executive Director Criss Henderson** has spanned nearly two decades, leading the seminal Shakespeare Repertory Company from a small, north side auditorium to its current, 75,000 square foot home on Navy Pier with a 50-week season encompassing more than 600 performances attracting 250,000 audience members, which includes 50,000 students and their teachers.

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Together, Gaines and Henderson have led Chicago Shakespeare Theater to its current prominence as one of the nation's leading not-for-profit theater companies guiding the Theater's productions to 54 Joseph Jefferson Awards for Artistic Excellence; three of London's prestigious Laurence Olivier Awards; and the 2008 Regional Theatre Tony Award, bringing Chicago to the singular distinction of being the city with the most Regional Tony Awards.

Their partnership has broadened the Theater's artistic programming to encompass—alongside constant exploration of Shakespeare's canon—theatrical presentations for students and families, musicals, new dramatic works, and collaborations with international theater artists. Throughout the region, CST's significant contributions to public learning range broadly from extensive work with Shakespeare in the schools to scholarly collaborations with Chicago's great universities.

Barbara Gaines is the founder of Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where she has directed more than 30 of Shakespeare's plays. Her work has been honored with Jeff Awards for Best Production and Best Direction. Ms. Gaines has been awarded the prestigious Honorary OBE (Officer of the British Empire); the Public Humanities Award from the Illinois Humanities Council; and the Spirit of Loyola Award. Ms. Gaines serves on the Shakespearean Council of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London and is a Life Trustee of Northwestern University and a member of the Cultural Affairs Advisory Board for the City of Chicago.

Criss Henderson has produced Chicago Shakespeare's past 18 seasons. He has been honored at the Kennedy Center as Arts Administrator of the Year and was recognized among the top 40 business people under the age of 40 in *Crain's Chicago Business*. Mr. Henderson also serves as president of the Producers' Association of Chicago area Theaters, and serves on the Board of Directors of the Illinois Arts Alliance and the League of Chicago Theaters. He is director of the MFA/Arts Leadership Program—an arts management training program created through a joint partnership between Chicago Shakespeare and The Theatre School at DePaul University.

the side project

The side project strives to apply its hyper-intimate use of space to redefine immediacy in the theatre. By presenting theatrically exciting new work and explorations of known works in this way, they aim to expose in sharp detail the delicate interworkings of humanity's vulnerability and resiliency.

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