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MetLife Foundation and Theatre Communications Group Announce Third Round Recipients of the *A-ha! Program*

New York – [MetLife Foundation](#) and [Theatre Communications Group](#) (TCG) announce the third round of recipients for the *A-ha! Program: Think It, Do It*, which encourages TCG member theatres to think and act creatively. Six theatres were awarded grants, totaling \$225,000, to either research and develop new production ideas or experiment and implement innovative concepts in the theatre field. The total award amount is a 50 percent increase from last year's total of \$150,000.

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 to create the *A-ha! Program*, which fosters creative thinking and action among TCG member theatres.

“In light of these uncertain economic times – when many arts organizations are wary of taking risks or seeking to create work through unproven methods – the *A-ha! Program* is a beacon to draw our member theatres to experimentation,” said Teresa Eyring, executive director of TCG. “This program allows them to strive for new ways of thinking and development and testing new models, without having to shoulder all the financial responsibility.”

The *A-ha! Program* has two components: *Think It* grants (\$25,000), which give theatre professionals the time and space for research and development, and *Do It* grants (\$50,000), which support the implementation and testing of new ideas. The program aims to discover and disseminate 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 continue its partnership with TCG to support not-for-profit theatres seeking new ways to create and develop work and practices that strengthen local communities and the field in general,” said Dennis White, president and CEO, MetLife Foundation. “We believe the *A-ha! Program* is essential to participants in building models of creative strategy.”

The 2010 *A-ha! Program* recipients are:

Think It

[Pillsbury House Theatre](#) (Minneapolis, Minn.) will develop its transformation into a Cultural Community Hub. The project will focus on assessment and metrics planning that will define and measure organizational success.

[Curious Theatre Company](#) (Denver, Colo.) will explore innovative opportunities for reinventing the resident artistic company model for the 21st century American theatre, by re-centering artists within producing organizations.

[Center Theatre Group](#) (Los Angeles, Calif.) plans to conduct focus groups and interviews with students, academic administrators and theatres to explore an internship model that pairs graduate students in arts administration with Los Angeles theatres.

Do It

[Southern Rep](#) (New Orleans, La.) will establish *Youth Onstage New Orleans, LA* (YO NOLA) as a pilot program to bring the arts to the underserved population at a New Orleans elementary school, via a student-run theatre company. This program includes mentoring, workshops and building life skills.

[Northlight Theatre](#) (Skokie, Ill.) is building *Northlight On Campus*, a two-year, comprehensive residency program in one underserved suburban middle school featuring after-school drama programs, artist visits, student matinees and a commissioned play for students.

[Dad's Garage Theatre Company](#) (Atlanta, Ga.) will create their first season of online content in tandem with their live work. This ongoing initiative will be self sustaining and will redefine them from a theatre company to a creative company.

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

The grant applications were reviewed by an independent national panel of theatre and technology professionals comprised of **Polly Carl**, director of artistic development, Steppenwolf Theatre Company (Chicago, Ill.); **Brad Carlin**, development director, Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center & board member/consultant, Salvage Vanguard Theater (New Braunfels, Texas); **Ian Garrett**, executive director, The Center for Sustainable Practice in the Arts (Los Angeles, Calif.); **Thomas O. Kriegsmann**, president, ArKtype (New York, N.Y.) and **Marilyn Tokuda**, arts education director, East West Players (Los Angeles, Calif.).

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, help

revitalize neighborhoods and stress accessibility and inclusion. 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. For more information about the Foundation, please visit its web site at www.metlife.org.

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. In all of its endeavors, TCG seeks to increase the organizational efficiency of its member theatres, cultivate and celebrate the artistic talent and achievements of the field and promote a larger public understanding of, and appreciation for, the theatre. TCG is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. www.tcg.org.

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