



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**TCG Announces Second Round of Blue Star Theatres Grants to Support Projects Connecting Theatre and Military Communities**

*New York, NY* – Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for theatre, and **Blue Star Families**, the country's largest chapter-based military families non-profit organization, are pleased to announce the second round of the **Blue Star Theatres Grant Program**. Through support from **MetLife Foundation**, the Grant Program will fund efforts that deepen the relationship between participating Blue Star Theatres and their local military community: veterans, children of active duty military, military spouses and/or active duty military. Each theatre will receive \$5,000 to support activities that can include talkbacks, outreach programs, sponsored tickets, performances, playwriting workshops, readings, and workshops that focus on military themes and service.

"TCG has been proud to partner with MetLife Foundation and Blue Star Families to support the growing connection between theatres and their local military communities," said Teresa Eyring, executive director, TCG. "From empowering the creative voices of service members to bringing theatre to the children of military families, the recipients of the second round of the Blue Star Theatres Grant Program are giving back to those who have given us so much."

"Blue Star Families is thrilled to partner with Theatre Communications Group on a new grant program designed to provide military families with greater access to theatrical performances," said **Noeleen Tillman**, executive director of Blue Star Families. "The participating theatre companies are set to offer an array of lively and entertaining productions, as well as serve as engaging Blue Star Families' partners helping to strengthen community bonds and foster a greater understanding of the military lifestyle."

"MetLife Foundation is pleased with the continued growth and success of the Blue Star Arts program," said **Dennis White**, president and CEO, MetLife Foundation. "Programs such as Blue Star Theatres play an important part in building bridges between military families and their local communities and we are proud to provide support."

**The recipients of the second round of Blue Star Theatres Grant Program are:**

**Cape Fear Regional Theatre (CFRT), Fayetteville, NC:** CFRT is presenting the world premiere of *Downrange: Voices from the Homefront* in March, 2016. The play is based on interviews with spouses about the impact of deployment on military families. CRFT will conduct outreach efforts during the rehearsal process to deepen their relationship with the vast military community of Fayetteville. Outreach activities will include performances of selections from the play on base and in schools, with talk backs and structured conversations around the difficult issues raised in the play.

**Geffen Playhouse, Los Angeles, CA:** In early 2015, the Geffen Playhouse held focus groups to hear directly from veterans about their top issues. A Veterans' Writing & Performance Workshop was designed to help veterans find their voices through writing and performing monologues. Veterans of all ages, branches of military, and stages of reintegration and recovery applied to join the Workshop, of which 16 were selected. The group participated in over 10 workshops to create monologues about heroes. A culminating performance was held on the Main Stage on December 7, 2015. Veterans and civilians from across Los Angeles were brought together to experience this performance to bring insight into what it means to be a veteran in an authentic, genuine way.

**History Theatre, St. Paul, MN:** Working with veteran's groups in the metro area, History Theatre engaged with over 100 Minnesota military veterans and their families around the production of *The Things They Carried*, based on the award-winning novel by Minnesota author Tim O'Brien. Through post-show discussions led by Vietnam veterans, History Theatre offered a unique forum to discuss and share experiences and reflections after this moving portrayal of a quintessential book on a ground soldier's journey. History Theatre will also provide discounted tickets to veterans and military families to upcoming performances of *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story*, and *George Bonga: Black Voyageur*.

**Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival (HVSF), Cold Spring/Garrison, NY:** HVSF will work to deepen its relationship with the West Point-U.S. Military Academy community across the Hudson River. Funded activities will include: expanded and enhanced HVSF Shakespeare residencies and workshops for cadets at USMA "Military Nights" at HVSF's fall and winter holiday productions in 2015; and free community and in-school performances of HVSF's fall 2015 and spring 2016 touring productions of Shakespeare and family-friendly classics. HVSF's free performance at West Point Middle School will include a Q&A with actors, a Study Guide, and a related hands-on workshop. This school serves the children of military families and the greater West Point-USMA community.

**The panelists for the inaugural Blue Star Theatres Grant Program were:**

**Michael Castelblanco**, partner and executive director, Society of Artistic Veterans; **BR McDonald**, founder and president, Veteran Artist Program; **Patrick Mullins**, interim artistic director, Virginia Stage Company; **Fay Simpson**, founder, The Lucid Body; and **Caridad Svich**, playwright, editor, and founder of NoPassport theatre alliance & press.

Blue Star Theatres was launched on September 28, 2012, with 22 theatres participating, and now features 151 participating theatres. This initiative is intended to recognize the contributions of service families, to build stronger connections between the theatre community and military families in communities all across the country, and to help in whatever small way we can to aid service people and their families as they seek to be integrated into the lives of their communities. Blue Star Theatres builds on the work already occurring at many theatres nationwide, including: playwriting classes to empower creative expression for veterans; community discussions on plays whose themes resonate with military families; free or discounted ticket programs; job postings and casting notices on military bases; and much more. TCG and Blue Star Families connect theatres with local bases and military families, and develop and disseminate best-practices for engaging with deployed personnel, veterans, and service families.

**One hundred and fifty-one TCG Member Theatres** have already signed on to participate in Blue Star Theatres. To find the full list, visit: [http://www.tcg.org/pdfs/advocacy/BSTalpha\\_9-29-15.pdf](http://www.tcg.org/pdfs/advocacy/BSTalpha_9-29-15.pdf). For more information about Blue Star Theatres, visit: <http://www.tcg.org/advocacy/bluestar/map.cfm>.

**Blue Star Families** is a national, nonprofit network of military families from all ranks and services, including guard and reserve, dedicated to supporting, connecting and empowering military families. With our partners, Blue Star Families hosts a robust array of morale and empowerment programs. Blue Star Families also works directly with the Department of Defense and senior members of local, State and Federal government to bring the most important military family issues to light. In concert with fellow

nonprofits, community advocates and public officials, Blue Star Families raises awareness of the challenges and strengths of military family life and works to make military life more sustainable. Our worldwide membership includes military spouses, children, parents and friends, as well as service members, veterans and civilians. For more information visit [bluestarfamilies.org](http://bluestarfamilies.org), [facebook.com/bluestarfamilies](https://facebook.com/bluestarfamilies) or [twitter.com/BlueStarFamily](https://twitter.com/BlueStarFamily).

**MetLife Foundation** was created in 1976 to continue MetLife's long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. Today, the Foundation is dedicated to advancing financial inclusion, committing \$200 million over the next five years to help build a secure future for individuals and communities around the world. MetLife Foundation is affiliated with MetLife, Inc., a leading global provider of insurance, annuities and employee benefit programs. MetLife holds leading market positions in the United States, Japan, Latin America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. For more information about the Foundation, visit [www.metlife.org](http://www.metlife.org).

For over 50 years, **Theatre Communications Group** (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, has existed to strengthen, nurture and promote the professional not-for-profit American theatre. TCG's constituency has grown from a handful of groundbreaking theatres to nearly 700 member theatres and affiliate organizations and more than 12,000 individuals nationwide. TCG offers its members networking and knowledge-building opportunities through conferences, events, research and communications; awards grants, approximately \$2 million per year, to theatre companies and individual artists; advocates on the federal level; and serves as the U.S. Center of the International Theatre Institute, connecting its constituents to the global theatre community. TCG is North America's largest independent publisher of dramatic literature, with 14 Pulitzer Prizes for Best Play on the TCG booklist. It also publishes the award-winning *American Theatre* magazine and ARTSEARCH®, the essential source for a career in the arts. 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. [www.tcg.org](http://www.tcg.org).