



Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Homeless Youth Find Creative Outlet; Perform in Upcoming Play

- EOC's Sanctuary Youth Services participants present Romeo and Juliet June 17 through 19 -

(Fresno, CA) – Homeless youth and young adults participating in Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission's (EOC) Youth Center for Cultural Arts and agency staff proudly present a special rendition of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, June 17 – 19, 2009. Performances begin at 7:30 p.m. at Sanctuary Theater located at 2336 Calaveras Street in downtown Fresno. A \$5.00 tax-deductible donation at the door will help sustain EOC's Sanctuary Youth Center for Cultural Arts program.

The play – whose cast and crew are comprised of 10 homeless young men and women – has given the participants a sense of belonging, an opportunity to work in and be exposed to the performing arts, and, most importantly, the priceless experience has boosted their morale. "Given the current situation I am in," expressed 22-year-old Jess Moreno, "this production has taken me off the streets, given me a safe place to hang out in, introduced me to new friends, and given me the opportunity to explore what has now become a new passion – acting!" Other cast and crew members include Sanctuary Youth Services employees and local actor/director Eric Day.

Established in 2008, EOC's Sanctuary Youth Services' Youth Center for Cultural Arts offers performing arts programs to runaway, homeless, and transient clients, ages 11 - 21 years, residing in our Sanctuary Youth Shelter or Transitional Living Centers, or served by our street outreach program. The program will further benefit the economic and educational needs of EOC's Transitional Living Center participants, who will be offered apprenticeships in operating equipment, security, ticket sales, and stage set up/break down. Sanctuary's Youth Center for Cultural Arts is sponsored by Fresno Arts Council, Fresno Regional Foundation, and the Bonner Family Foundation.

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For more information, please call Michelle Tutunjian, Sanctuary Youth Services Director, at 559-498-8543.

About EOC's Sanctuary Youth Services

EOC's Sanctuary Youth Services provides a "continuum of care" to assist runaway, homeless, and otherwise displaced youth with successful transition from adolescence into adulthood. Sanctuary Youth Services operates an emergency shelter for 11-17 year old youth in crisis; provides outreach services to homeless youth and families on the streets; operates three transitional living centers to assist 16-24 year-old youth with preparation for sustainable, independent living; and maintains Safe Place sites throughout Fresno County to facilitate youth access to shelter and services.

About Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC)

For over 40 years, Fresno County EOC – a private, nonprofit agency – has helped low-income Fresno County residents become self-sufficient. EOC offers over 30 comprehensive community-based programs that develop an individual's capabilities and places them on the path toward independence.

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