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M E D I A R E L E A S E

VERA KATZ PARK TO BE DEDICATED WITH A COMMUNITY CELEBRATION MAY 29TH

Portland Center Stage celebrates the Honorable Vera Katz by dedicating Portland's newest park, adjacent to the Gerding Theater at the Armory, in her honor.

May 23, 2008 – PORTLAND, OR. All of Portland is invited to celebrate the dedication of Portland's newest park, the capstone project of the restoration of the Portland Armory, in honor of former Mayor Vera Katz on **Thursday May 29th from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm.** The Community Celebration will take place adjacent to the new park on a closed down Davis Street between 10th and 11th Avenues. Featured throughout the event will be a tribal blessing from the **Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde**; complimentary beer from the Armory's new neighbor, **Deschutes Brewery**; live site-specific dance performance from Portland dance ensemble **Rumpus Room**; music from the highly unusual **Portland Bike Ensemble** and the all-female sax quartet the **Quadrophonnes**; plus a variety of street food vendors. The Honorable Vera Katz will be in attendance for the dedication, along side her former chief of staff (and Portland's new mayor-elect) **Sam Adams**. Portland Center Stage Executive Director **Greg Phillips** and **Capital Campaign Chair Julie Vigeland** will share some exciting news about the Capital Campaign. Admission to the event is **free and open to the public.**

The dedication of **Vera Katz Park** marks the completion of the final phase of the historic restoration of the Portland Armory, home to Portland Center Stage, which received **LEED Platinum** status for its commitment to sustainable building practices. One of the elements of the sustainable renovation is the recapture and recycling of rainwater, which is used throughout the building for flushing toilets and other non-potable water uses. Vera Katz Park incorporates a flowing water sculpture designed by Scott Murase out of black marble sourced through sustainable stone purveyor Yellow Mountain Stone Works. The water flows into the building's "bioswale" a system that uses native plants and gravel to scrub rain runoff before it is allowed to flow into the Willamette River.

The park has been named in honor of Portland's 45th Mayor, **Vera Katz**, and the community celebration will be an opportunity for guests to explore the new park and honor her contribution to arts and culture in Portland. The park pays tribute to an unswerving, visionary leader who City Commissioner Sam Adams recently praised for recognizing,

*"More than any leader I know, that the arts provide a window
into both the everyday and the extraordinary.
It is this recognition that drives her passion and commitment
to making the arts accessible to everyone."*

The Honorable Vera Katz will be joining us for the dedication, as will her former chief of staff and current mayor-elect **Sam Adams**. The event will mark Sam Adams' first public appearance following his landslide victory in the recent election.

To celebrate the occasion, we will be **closing down Davis Street** between 10th and 11th Avenues from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. New Portland Center Stage neighbors **Deschutes Brewery** will provide complimentary beer to launch the celebration, and a variety of food vendors will be on hand to slake thirsts and provide snacks ranging from ice cream to burritos to locally made sausages.

The festivities will begin with a tribal blessing of the park provided by the **Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde**. The blessing will be followed by a welcome from Portland Center Stage Artistic Director **Chris Coleman** who will introduce Mayor-elect **Sam Adams** and the Honorable Vera Katz. Portland Center Stage **Board Vice-Chair Bob Gerding** will formally dedicate the park, and Portland Center Stage's new **Executive Director Greg Phillips** will join **Capital Campaign Chair Julie Vigeland** to share some **exciting news** about the Armory Project.

Afterwards, the celebration will really kick off with music from all-female sax quartet the **Quadrophones** who will play a 20 minute set featuring 19th and early 20th century music including works by Scott Joplin, negro spirituals, Cuban dances and a touch of Debussy.

Local dance ensemble **Rumpus Room**, headed by former OBT Dancer Rachel Tess, will premiere a site-specific dance work along the length of the park that celebrates its place as Portland's newest park and celebrates former Mayor Katz's long association with dance and the arts. Katz studied dance under Martha Graham in the late '50s.

Closing out the festivities will be a concert from the uniquely Portland musical troupe the **Portland Bike Ensemble**, who will create a lush ambient soundscape by using various parts of their bicycles as musical instruments.

Vera Katz Park was made possible in part by a generous donation from the **Spirit Mountain Community Fund**. The Community Celebration has been made possible by support from **Deschutes Brewery, Stoel Rives** and **The Standard**.

For further information about Vera Katz Park and the Community Celebration please contact **Trisha Pancio** at **503.445.3700** or by email at **trishap@pcs.org**.

PORTLAND CENTER STAGE inspires our community by bringing stories to life in unexpected ways. Established in 1988 as an off shoot of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, PCS became an independent theater in 1994 and has been under the leadership of Artistic Director Chris Coleman since May 2000. The company presents a blend of classic, contemporary and original productions in a conscious effort to appeal to the eclectic palate of theatergoers in Portland. PCS also offers a variety of education and outreach programs for curious minds from six to 106, including the PCS GreenHouse, a school of theater.

THE GERDING THEATER AT THE ARMORY houses a 599-seat Main Stage and a 200-seat black box Studio. It was the first building on the National Register of Historic Places, and the first performing arts venue, to achieve a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certification. The Gerding Theater at the Armory opened to the public on Oct. 1, 2006. The capital campaign to fund the renovation of this hub for community artistic activity continues.

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A Brief Biography of Vera Katz

Vera (Pistrak) Katz was born of Russian heritage in Düsseldorf, Germany in 1933. The following year Vera, her parents, and older sister Zena fled Nazi persecution and embarked on a voyage that took them to France, hiking over the Pyrenees into Spain and Portugal before they eventually settled in New York. Vera graduated from Brooklyn College in 1955 (where she studied dance under the great Martha Graham) and moved to Portland in 1964 with her former husband, artist Mel Katz, and their infant son Jesse. Vera entered politics originally as an activist, volunteering for Robert F. Kennedy's presidential primary campaign; lobbying the Legislature on behalf of migrant workers; and in the early '70s, along with Gretchen Kafoury and others, picketing the City Club of Portland to protest their exclusion of women—effectively pushing the Club into admitting women.

One of the pioneering women in Oregon politics, Vera broke new ground, opening doors for future generations of women. She was first elected to the Oregon House of Representatives in 1972. During her tenure she became the first woman to chair the Ways and Means Committee, as well as Oregon's first woman to serve as Speaker of the House, and the only three-time speaker. As speaker, Vera was known for her fairness and ability to run a bi-partisan House. Governor John Kitzhaber describes her as, "one of the last great speakers of the Oregon House of Representatives...She built a powerful base of understanding, and respect, and support across the aisle." In 1992, she launched a successful mayoral campaign, starting the first of three terms as Portland's third female mayor. In her 12 years in office, Portland won nearly every national designation given for livable cities.

In 2000 Mayor Katz was diagnosed with breast cancer. Rather than quit, she incorporated her private battle into her public persona. She raised public awareness by working on the Race for the Cure and joining the nationwide Mayor's Campaign against Breast Cancer. In 2004 doctors found adenocarcinoma — a rare and aggressive form of cancer. With this news Vera announced that she would not seek a fourth term, ending 32 years in public office. In the fall of 2007, Vera Katz was declared cancer-free. She continues to serve the public by teaching a class at Portland State University and sitting on several local boards and committees dealing with city issues close to her heart.

Throughout her career Vera championed women's causes and civil rights, expanded public transportation, prioritized sustainable solutions for community development—particularly the revitalization of the central city and projects like Oregon Convention Center, the Pearl District, Chinese Classical Gardens, PGE Park, the Eastbank Esplanade, and the South Waterfront district—and was a unyielding advocate for local schools, neighborhood livability, and the primacy of the arts and culture in the life of the city.

This singularity of passion and vision for her city was summed up during Vera Katz's 12th and final State of the City address, when she said: "Here, we haven't been, and should never be, afraid of big ideas, of thinking out loud, or of robust debate. This is essential to the spirit of Portland."