



## Father Ryan Arts Center

*of Focus On Renewal*

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## Press Release

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### Father Ryan Arts Center partners with local schools to enhance child literacy skills

**McKees Rocks, PA, October 22, 2008** — Third graders from Sto-Rox will bring words and characters from the page to the stage in a new Readers Theater Program through the Father Ryan Arts Center thanks to a \$76,000 grant by the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation to develop an integrated reading and theater arts program for schools in western Allegheny County.

The focus of the grant is to create a kindergarten through fifth grade theater and reading curriculum for the Sto-Rox School District and St. John of God Catholic School and establish a roster of participating schools for the second year.

Beginning Wednesday, November 5, 130 children from both schools will spend their reading period at the Father Ryan Arts Center once a week in an effort to enhance and complement each school's current literacy arts curriculum. Through age-appropriate readings, children will discover fun, imaginative ways to build reading fluency, boost listening and speaking skills and improve confidence. Sister Anna Marie Gaglia, principal of St. John of God Catholic School, said, "This is a wonderful opportunity for our children to experience different methods of learning outside of the classroom that encourages emotional growth, motivation, and engagement. We are thrilled to be a part of this program and hope this is only the beginning of long partnership with the Father Ryan Arts Center."

The pilot program will begin the second semester of the 2008-2009 school year with all of the third grade students from the Sto-Rox Elementary School and St. John of God Catholic School. The goal is to expand the number of schools and children served each year. With the guidance of a trained theater arts educator, the Father Ryan Arts Center will provide facility and technical support for the program by working closely with third grade teachers to develop a curriculum based on children's author and Readers Theater expert, Aaron Shepard, known for its playful and less restricting approach. Using minimal props, children will form a keen sense of awareness while interpreting the written word that will aid in the development of academic skills to improve test scores.

Patricia Moran, Father Ryan Arts Center director, said, “Our vision for the arts center is rooted in the belief that as an alternative arts education facility, we will support and supplement the curriculum of local schools, and this partnership brings us one step closer to achieving that goal. As area schools and teachers are developing their curricula, we hope they will seek our arts center as another tool that opens the doors to learning all subjects through artistic exploration and expression.”

For more information on the new Readers Theater Program or to learn how your school can participate, please call 412.771.3052 or visit [www.FatherRyanArtsCenter.org](http://www.FatherRyanArtsCenter.org).

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