

To: All Participating Sears Drama Festival Schools

**From: Dwight Skeates
Sears Corporate Communications**

cc: Wayne Fairhead

Date: December 2016

Re: Sears Drama Festival

Wow, this season we are celebrating the 71st annual Sears Ontario Drama Festival, the 7th season of the Sears British Columbia Drama Festival and the return of the full Sears Atlantic Drama Festival. On behalf of Sears Canada, I welcome you to another exciting year!

Communication of the Festival throughout your community helps gain support and recognition for the efforts of your students and of course, extra ticket sales which mean more support for your presentations.

To assist you in obtaining publicity for your participation in the Festival, please find enclosed an INFORMATION KIT.

Once again, I wish you, your school, and your Festival all of our best during this season of the Sears Drama Festivals. We are extremely proud of the exceptionally fine talent and dedication shown by everyone involved. Sears is truly proud to be the sponsor of the Festival.

Students participating in the Sears Drama Festival in Ontario, British Columbia and the Atlantic region can share their experiences and become a fan of the Sears Drama Festival Facebook fan page on www.facebook.com/searsdramafestival.

The 2016/17 Sears kit includes the following information:

- ▶ The Sears Drama Festival: Structure and past participants
- ▶ Make It Local!
- ▶ Helpful Tips
- ▶ Reach out, Follow up and Engage your local Media
- ▶ Engage your local Sears General Manager or Hometown Owner
- ▶ The Sears Canada Charitable Foundation – giving back

SOME DETAILS ABOUT THE SEARS DRAMA FESTIVAL

Ontario Festival Structure

There are three levels to the Festival:

DISTRICT FESTIVALS: High school drama groups must first qualify at a district area festival. Each district, organized by geographical location, has from six to thirty entries depending upon the school population of the area.

REGIONAL SHOWCASES: District finalists are then invited to one of six regional festivals, each running between three and six nights.

PROVINCIAL SHOWCASE: Two Outstanding Productions from each region are invited to perform at the Provincial Showcase. The Ontario Showcase will be held at the Chatham Cultural Centre from May 10 to 13, 2017.

Professional workshops and information sessions are provided at all levels of the Ontario Festival.

At the District and Regional levels, awards are given for Outstanding Productions, individual performances, stage management and technical achievement. Awards of Excellence and Awards of Merit are presented to promising and talented student performers, writers, directors, designers and technicians.

At the Provincial Showcase, the Festival is non-competitive. Awards for Outstanding Achievement and an Award for stage management are given to individual students and groups. Awards are also given for Exceptional Achievement. In addition, there are scholarships (worth \$500 and \$3,000) awarded in Ontario to students each year for further post-secondary school study. These scholarships help the recipients to pursue their goal of a career in the performing arts.

British Columbia Festival Structure

High school drama groups must first qualify at a Zone Festival. There are 18 Zones but not all participate in a given year. One production moves on to the Provincial Showcase from each participating Zone. In addition up to three plays from the Youthwrite Competition for original student writing are presented at the BC Showcase.

In 2017, the Showcase will be held at Douglas College in New Westminster from April 27-30.

Professionally led workshops and information sessions are provided as an integral element of the Festival experience.

Awards are given to students for excellence of achievement in all areas of theatrical endeavour – performance, writing, direction, design, music and technical work.

A Sears Festival Scholarship, which was implemented in 2014, will continue in 2017.

Atlantic Festival Structure

High school groups are invited by a panel of theatre/education professionals.

These productions will be presented at The Watermark Theatre in North Rustico, P.E.I. from May 19-22, 2017.

Professionally led workshops and information sessions are provided as an integral part of the Festival experience.

Awards are given to students for excellence of achievement in all areas of theatrical endeavour – performance, writing, technical work, music, design and direction.

A Sears Festival Scholarship may be given at the discretion of the adjudicators and Festival organizers.

Festival Past Participants

Festival “Grads” include:

Steve Allerick

Madeleine Azzola

Joël Beddow

Franco Boni

Michel Charbonneau

Juan Chioran

Antonio Cimolini

David Cronenberg

Rosemary Dunsmore

(the late) Mira Friedlander

Henry Gauthier

Michael Gauthier

Sky Gilbert

(the late) Urjo Kareda

Margot Kidder

Michele Lansberg

Sue LePage

Robert Marinier

Rachel McAdams

Des McAnuff

Yanna McIntosh

Bram Morrison

Mathieu Pichette

Fernand Rainville

Richard Rose

Manon St-Jules

Rick Salutin

David Schatzky

Helen Shaver

Jason Sherman

Don Shipley

Sonja Smits

Linda Sorgini

Guy Sprung

Judith Thompson

R.H. Thomson

Brad Wright

MAKE YOUR FESTIVAL LOCAL – TO ATTRACT MEDIA

This kit will arm you and your school with general information, but your local media will be especially interested in LOCAL information. When reaching out to the local media make sure to include the following details:

- ▶ Name of your presentation (s).
- ▶ What the presentation (s) is about.
- ▶ Why it was chosen and why it will be interesting.
- ▶ Information on the playwright (especially if local, student written).
- ▶ Appeal - who would it have particular appeal to i.e. Original, Families, music lovers etc.
- ▶ Schedule of presentation (s). Send a list showing names of presentation (s), time and location.
- ▶ Tickets – where are they available and how much do they cost.
- ▶ Name and background of Adjudicator
- ▶ List of awards that will be presented, night they will be presented, names of people making presentation (i.e. Sears General Manager, a local MP)
- ▶ If local dignitaries (i.e. the Mayor, local trustee, artist in the community) have been invited, indicate what night they will be attending
- ▶ List of awards won in the past
- ▶ Names of local students who have gone on to a career in dramatic arts and brief update on their career (biography, photograph, website)
- ▶ High resolution photos from rehearsals, if possible (good photos will add greatly to the appeal of your release)

HELPFUL TIPS

- ▶ Media like information that is new and will stimulate reader interest. Find a way to make your announcement interesting. For example, instead of starting with “XYZ Secondary School will present its production of *Assignment Earth*, try something that will grab their interest like “Kids Sing to Save the Earth at XYZ”.
- ▶ Try to model your writing on what you see in a newspaper...avoid “we” or “I” unless it is in a quote from a teacher etc. If it is written this way, there is a better chance of a busy journalist using your copy instead of trying to rewrite it all.
(this saves them time and encourages use!)

PITCH, FOLLOW UP & ENGAGE LOCAL MEDIA

Pitch your story to your local media

- ▶ Prepare a local media contact list which includes Arts, Entertainment, Lifestyle
And Education Editors/producers from local print and broadcast media.. Send a
media kit to each Editor/Producer.

- ▶ When sending material to media, include a personal letter thanking the journalist
in anticipation of their support and, if applicable, thanking them for
previous support. ***Offer them free tickets to any performance they choose!***

Follow up with local media

NOTE: This is an important component of your media relations. Kits don't always get to the right person. Whether they received your kit or not, it shows them that you feel the Festival is important enough that you have taken the time to call.

CALL TO ASK...

- ▶ if they received the kit
- ▶ if they require any further information
- ▶ what night they would like tickets for (have the tickets delivered immediately)

Media people are very busy and appreciate no nonsense, they require very detailed information. However, if you can add something special when you send you media kit, go for it! For example, inflated balloons announcing your Festival tied to the edge of the kit could be fun!

USE YOUR IMAGINATION, TO GRAB THEIRS!

Engage your local media

- ▶ Offer two tickets to your local media to any performance they choose (they would probably be interested in knowing what nights any local dignitaries are going if you can get that information in advance).
- ▶ Follow-up to confirm who will be attending and then reserve two aisle seats near the front for them.
- ▶ Have one of your reps in the lobby on the night of the performance to greet them and answer any questions.

ENGAGE YOUR LOCAL SEARS GENERAL MANAGER OR HOMETOWN OWNER

Sears Canada is a proud sponsor of the Drama Festivals in Ontario, BC and the Atlantic Provinces, and Sears stores want to be an active member of the local community. Your local store's General Manager or local Hometown Store owner would like to be a part of your event.

Please contact the Sears General Manager or Hometown Owner and he or she will be delighted to help you in any way he or she can. Remember to invite the person to say a few words at the opening and/or closing of your Festival.

Similarly, local dignitaries, like the Mayor or Member of Parliament, or prominent people in the local arts community would always appreciate an invitation.

For the small cost of the ticket, word will be spread about the quality of your presentation. Your Sears General Manager or Hometown Owner can also help you decide who to invite, help you publicize your festival and be part of the invitation if you like.

THE SEARS CANADA CHARITABLE FOUNDATION – GIVING BACK

The Drama Festivals are an integral part of the Sears Canada Charitable Foundation (SCCF) realization of its mission to support the healthy development of Canadian youth. SCCF is a registered Canadian charity that collects and distributes funds to other charitable organizations that support this mandate.

The “health” component is centred on raising awareness and providing funds for research and treatment for the fight against **childhood cancer**. The “development” component is centred on after-school programs and initiatives, which enrich children’s lives and allows them to reach their full potential as contributing members of society.

The Sears Drama Festivals are an example of the development component of the SCCF mandate. For the 2016 Drama Festivals, the Sears Foundation **would like to encourage** participating schools to include a fundraising component so that the students can give back to the Foundation that has enthusiastically supported this program for decades.

A separate tool kit has been prepared for all schools to assist the students to create a fundraising campaign for their own school and the Sears Foundation. **Please see that separate document attached to this tool kit.**

WE WISH YOU ALL THE BEST WITH THIS YEAR’S FESTIVAL!

If you require any additional information, please contact Dwight Skeates, Community and Corporate Affairs, Sears Canada, at (250) 595-9111, ext. 411 or dskeate@sears.ca.