



junior players *Shakespeare with Henry*

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Junior Players Brings Inaugural Youth Shakespeare in Prison Program to Texas Program expected to run June 2023 through September 2023

DALLAS, TX, March 38, 2023 – Junior Players is excited to bring the first ever youth focused Shakespeare in Prison program to Texas in 2023 – making Dallas home to a groundbreaking new program. This program is a partnership between Junior Players and The Henry Wade Juvenile Justice Center where incarcerated youth will work alongside professional Junior Players teaching artists to learn, and eventually perform, excerpts from one of Shakespeare's prolific works, *Henry V*.

Aptly titled Shakespeare with Henry, this program will draw inspiration from the dozens of pilot programs that have taken place all over the world in the last decade and have illustrated the long lasting effects of exposure to Shakespeare in incarcerated youth. These effects include self-efficacy, improved empathy, and a stronger sense of community and participation in Shakespeare in Prison programs has shown reduced recidivism rates, sometimes by more than half.

While programs like this one have proven themselves successful across the world, this is the first program of it's kind to land in Texas and Junior Players is excited to bring Shakespeare with Henry's debut to Dallas.

Throughout this program, Junior Players intends to develop a passion for learning within our participants, especially those who are at high risk of not completing or continuing their education, as well as develop literacy skills (reading, writing, and oral communication), including those participants who are classified as learning disabled and/or developmentally challenged. Junior Players will also support Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and grow transferrable life skills like responsible decision making, social awareness, relationship skills, self-awareness, and self-management.

In order to prepare for this program, Junior Players has hired and trained 4 highly-qualified local teaching artists, who have all undergone extensive background checks and training protocols. Through these trainings, Junior Players has emphasized the importance of SEL and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) principles. We acknowledge that BIPOC members of our community are unfairly targeted and as a result of a biased system, more likely to end up in detention facilities. Partnering with facilities like Henry Wade for programs like this one provides resources to our promise-filled youth. Through this program, Junior Players teaching artists will be able to relate the universal human themes contained in Shakespeare's works to our participants, including their past experiences and choices, their present situation, and their future possibility.

Junior Players was founded in 1955 and is the oldest non-profit children's theater organization in Dallas. Over its existence, Junior Players has striven to meet the changing needs of the community. From 1955 to 1989, Junior Players presented traditional children's theater productions performed entirely by children and teenagers. In 1989, the Board of Directors changed the focus of Junior Players activities, deciding that, Junior Players can best serve the youth of Dallas by providing free programming accessible to all the children of North Texas. Junior Players, therefore, exclusively provides free arts education programs in local recreation and cultural centers, housing projects, elementary and middle schools, and through social service agencies serving youth at risk.

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