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**FIRST STAGE THEATER ACADEMY TO OFFER CLASSES AT NEW
OCONOMOWOC ARTS CENTER THIS SUMMER**

MILWAUKEE, WIS. (January 5, 2009) – First Stage Theater Academy – First Stage Children’s Theater’s professional theater arts training program for young people ages five through 18 – will be the in-residence theater training program at the brand new Oconomowoc Arts Center, 641 E. Forest Street in Oconomowoc, attached to Oconomowoc High School, beginning with its summer classes in June 2009.

Dr. Patricia Neudecker, Superintendent of Oconomowoc Area School District, said “We are thrilled to provide an exceptional location for First Stage Academy to offer classes for local families. This is a wonderful example of how the new Oconomowoc Arts Center will showcase our community, our businesses, our schools and our commitment to the arts. We hope this will be the first of many such arts collaborations to benefit Oconomowoc.”

The Arts Center was part of a \$49.6M referendum passed by voters in 2006 which funded the construction of two intermediate schools located in opposite sides of the city, the renovation and expansion of the Oconomowoc High School gymnasium as well as the addition of the Oconomowoc Arts Center to the High School.

“We are honored that the Oconomowoc School District sought out First Stage as a partner for their vision of arts excellence,” said Jeff Frank, First Stage’s artistic director. “Oconomowoc and its surrounding communities have long been supporters of and participants in the arts, and we look forward to connecting with families through our programming at the new facility,” continued Frank.

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First Stage Theater Academy offers summer classes at Oconomowoc Arts Center/add one

First Stage Summer Theater Academy consists of one, two, three and four-week sessions from June 15 through August 7, 2009. These half-day or full-day sessions, offered for students entering grades K5 through 12 in fall 2009, teach students broad aspects of theater performance, such as improvisation, character building, speaking techniques, stage movement, musical theater, and Shakespeare. From these sessions, students take away new skills that help them develop personally, such as cooperation, empathy, confidence and focus. Small class sizes ensure a personal, interactive and focused experience for each student.

In addition to the new classes at the Oconomowoc Arts Center, classes are held at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center, 325 West Walnut Street, and at the Sharon Lynne Wilson Center, 19805 West Capitol Drive in Brookfield.

Registration for all First Stage Theater Academy summer classes opens in mid-January 2009. For further information, visit www.FirstStage.org or call the First Stage Theater Academy office at (414) 267-2970.

First Stage Children's Theater is Milwaukee's premier, professional family theater. Founded in 1987, the mission of the company is to touch hearts and transform lives by creating exceptional theater experiences for young people and families through professional theater productions, theater academy training and dynamic in-school education programs. First Stage is a member of the Theater Wisconsin and Milwaukee Arts Partners, and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF).