



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Contact:**

Cindy Moran, PR Consultant, [cmoran@firststage.org](mailto:cmoran@firststage.org) or (414) 405-6290

**FIRST STAGE ANNOUNCES NEW  
HOPE FUND  
SPECIAL RELIEF INITIATIVE**

**Milwaukee, WI – September 21, 2020** – First Stage, one of the nation’s leading theaters for young people and families, announced at their annual ImpACT event a new special relief initiative called the **HOPE Fund**. The purpose of this fund is to help First Stage endure the financial effects related to COVID-19 during the 2020/21 season. Donations to this fund will help support the individuals who provide hope for thousands of young people and families and make it possible for First Stage to continue to transform lives through theater by engaging, enlightening, entertaining and education. All charitable gifts made to the HOPE Fund will be matched 1-to-1, up to \$100,000 by the **Molitor Foundation**.

This year’s ImpACT event was held virtually on September 17, 2020 and was emceed by **Sheri Williams Pannell**, First Stage Artistic Associate/UWM Professor/Performer and featured **Caryn Esten**, First Stage Board President and Vice President, Strategic Planning & Experience Management at Froedtert Health, **Laura Orr**, First Stage Board Member and Chief Strategy & Governance Officer at Children’s Wisconsin and **Jill Wiench**, Child Life Specialist from Children’s Wisconsin as the keynote speaker. First Stage’s Artistic Director **Jeff Frank**, Programming Director **Julia Magnasco** and Next Steps Director and Resident Teaching Artist **Samantha Montgomery** were also part of the program as well as performances by First Stage staff, alumni and young performers. A link to the virtual ImpACT event can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wk8g1XfsnNk>.

First Stage is only as strong as its talented team of artistic, administrative and teaching staffs. Managing Director **Betsy Corry** added, “It is the amazing First Stage team that continues to focus on delivering our mission of transforming lives through theater to our community’s young people, families and educators. Support of the HOPE Fund initiative ensures that we can continue to serve!” For more information on the HOPE Fund and on how to donate, please visit [www.FirstStage.org/HOPEFund](http://www.FirstStage.org/HOPEFund), or contact First Stage Development Director **Nancy Clarkin** at [nclarkin@firststage.org](mailto:nclarkin@firststage.org) or **(414) 267-2938**.

To learn more about **Through Our Lens – A First Stage Virtual Performance Series**, First Stage's Virtual 2020/21 Season of Plays, please visit [www.firststage.org](http://www.firststage.org) or call **(414) 267-2961**.

###

### **About First Stage**

First Stage is one of the nation's leading theaters for young people and families. First Stage touches hearts, engages minds and transforms lives by creating extraordinary theater experiences through professional theater productions that inspire, enlighten and entertain. Its Theater Academy, the nation's largest high-impact theater training program for young people, fosters life skills through stage skills and serves nearly 2,000 students each year. As Wisconsin's leader in arts-integrated education in schools, First Stage's dynamic Theater in Education programs promote literacy, character building and experiential learning throughout the curriculum, serving over 20,000 students each year. First Stage was selected to participate in the Partners in Education program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (2012), and was the recipient of the *Milwaukee Business Journal's* Eureka Award, recognizing creativity and innovation in business, education and the arts for its Next Steps program for students on the autism spectrum (2013, 2015). First Stage is a member of TYA/USA, the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education, Milwaukee Arts Partners and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF). [www.firststage.org](http://www.firststage.org).