

For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Sean Martin

617-756-7474

## “Weight of Words” Troupe Wins Critics Choice at District Festival

### *Palm Beach Lakes High School Thespians Win Superior Rating*

(West Palm Beach, FL) -- Palm Beach Lakes High School students performing the anti-bullying musical “*The Weight of Words*” under the direction of Theatre Education Director Donalda McCarthy, won a superior rating at the recent Florida State Thespians District XV Festival One-Acts Competition and also earned the distinction of Critics Choice. These talented and determined students prepared for more than a year to perform this work. “The students worked incredibly hard to earn this superior rating and achieve their goal,” said McCarthy. “This is a musical with an important message, and the message is more impactful because it is delivered by teens.”

“*The Weight of Words*” examines bullying and its effects within a home, school, community, nation and our world. It was written and conceived by the Lovewell Institute for the Creative Arts, and the original cast at Nova High School in Broward County. Boca Raton’s Promise, a mental health non-profit promoting mental health education, sponsored several Lovewell projects in Palm Beach County. “This work was, by far, the most-timely and well received of all. After school principals embraced it, and the Action Alliance for Mental Health supported it, Boca Raton’s Promise funded the first year of implementation,” said Rita Thrasher, President/CEO of Boca Raton’s Promise.

After winning support from district administrators, Palm Beach Lakes Community High School, along with Boca Raton Community High School, Forest Hill High School, and Seminole Ridge Community High School, showcased the first “*The Weight of Words*” community performances last February. The impact was immediate and powerful, and the Palm Beach Lakes troupe obtained approval to enter the District Thespians conference.

McCarthy and her students’ tremendous work on “*The Weight of Words*” is expected to draw attention to the effectiveness of youth voices in addressing a social issue which is prevalent throughout communities. The School District is now funding and overseeing the second-year implementation of “*The Weight of Words*” productions in seven high schools: Forest Hill, Lake Worth, Pahokee, Palm Beach Lakes, Royal Palm Beach, Seminole Ridge and Village Academy. Pete Stewart, Specialist in Health Education at the School District, announced that all school communities will have an opportunity to see the show on February 9, 2016.

“This musical is an effective way to address bullying and youth mental health because the audience hears directly from teens who explore the issues from every angle,” said Dr. Seth Bernstein, an Action Alliance Steering Committee member and Psychologist at Boys Town South Florida. “Bullying and mental health issues have a devastating impact on kids and their ability to learn at school. Remaining silent about these issues does not help anyone. In fact, silence is damaging. I applaud the School District for supporting this program, as it truly is having a positive impact on our youth, schools -and entire community.”

For more information about this initiative, please contact Pete Stewart at (561) 434-8974.

###

|