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**CityDance Early Arts' students take center court to perform during
half-time at an upcoming Washington Wizard's game**

Washington, DC—More than 75 students from **CityDance Ensemble's DREAM program** will take center court to perform a dance routine during half-time of the **Washington Wizard's** basketball game on **Saturday, March 8** at the **Verizon Center**. Returning for the third year by invitation from **Washington Sports & Entertainment**, 3rd – 6th grade students from several local elementary and middle schools will showcase the talent they have developed throughout the year-long DREAM program run by CityDance Ensemble's **Early Arts** outreach education division.

"The DREAM halftime reflects Abe Pollin's [Chairman & CEO of Washington Sports & Entertainment] commitment to the DC community and our commitment to great halftime entertainment," said **Judy Holland-Burton**, Washington Sports & Entertainments Senior Vice President. "Our fans want to support our youngsters, and these kids, coming largely from Wards 7 and 8, receive very few opportunities to show what they can do. This is the third year we've brought them onto the court for a half-time show, and we're looking forward to seeing this larger group, with more kids and more schools, out there. It's special for them and for us."

Now in its fifth year, the DREAM program (Dream, Research, Evaluate, Act, Motivate) transforms the lives of at-risk youth in the DC metropolitan area school through an after-school arts and community building curriculum. The program will reach more than 110 students this year through performances and classes designed to empower children to identify their dreams and gain the confidence and self-esteem to pursue them. Each program consists of a kick-off performance for the entire school by **CityDance Ensemble**, a 24-week after-school program that meets twice weekly, and an end-of-year performance bringing together children from all the DREAM schools.

The DREAM students selected to perform at the Washington Wizards game have been in rehearsal since late November in the studios at the **CityDance Center at Strathmore** in North Bethesda, Maryland. Leading rehearsals is local professional dancer and choreographer **Aysha Upchurch** who performs and teaches dances throughout the metropolitan area.

(more)

“It is an absolute joy to see these children work so hard to achieve their goals,” notes **Alexe Nowakowski**, CityDance Executive Director. “This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to perform at the Washington Wizards game gives these students a chance to extend their vision beyond just their classroom or community and to realize what it feels like to succeed and demonstrate their talent and achievements before a large crowd. It’s truly a way to build their self-esteem and give them hope for a promising future.”

During the 2007-2008 school year, the DREAM program is operating in five Washington, DC elementary schools: Green in Ward 8; C.W. Harris in Ward 7; J.O. Wilson in Ward 6; and Brightwood and Kingsbury Day School in Ward 4. The program also operates in two middle schools—Kelly Miller in Ward 7 and Shugart Middle School in Temple Hills, Maryland—and in two elementary schools outside the District—Charles Drew Elementary in Silver Spring, Maryland and Tucker Elementary in Alexandria, Virginia.

“Having the DREAM program at C.W. Harris for the fourth year has captured the minds, spirit, and body of our boys and girls to focus their creative talents through movement and dance, and more importantly to focus their thinking on what they aspire to become and how they must plan in order to reach their dream,” comments **Shirley Ambush**, Principal of C.W. Harris Elementary School. “One of the great opportunities CityDance provides our students is participation in the Wizards’ half-time performance. Our students can barely contain their excitement!”

The DREAM program is sponsored by the **Children & Youth Investment Trust Corporation** and **Comcast**, as well as the Mead Family Foundation, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, Campagna Center, Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, Agriculture Credit Union, NIH Federal Credit Union, Meyer Foundation, Cafritz Foundation, Marpat Foundation, Prince Charitable Trusts, and Washington Sports & Entertainment.

In addition, **Whole Foods Market** has partnered with CityDance as the exclusive snack provider for the DREAM program, donating more 6,000 snacks to students participating in the program.

Concurrent with the March 8 DREAM performance is a weekend of concerts performed by **CityDance Ensemble**, the organization’s professional contemporary dance company, at the **Lansburgh Theatre**. In a collaborative concert that blends dance with literature, theater, music, and a discerning interpretation of ideas both old and new, CityDance presents a three-act concert featuring two acts of an original adaptation of *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* and one act of a global warming inspired piece titled *On a Train Heading South*. The converging of these two events demonstrates CityDance’s commitment to both performance and education, with dance students and professionals alike performing simultaneously just blocks away from one another.

About CityDance Ensemble, Inc.

CityDance Ensemble, Inc. is the parent organization to **CityDance Ensemble**, an award-winning contemporary repertory dance company; **Early Arts**, an arts outreach program for youth serving more than 25,000 students each year; **CityDance Education Centers**, facilities committed to excellence in dance training for youth and adults; and **FilmWORKS**, a creator and presenter of dance-on-camera. The mission of CityDance Ensemble, Inc. is to advance the appreciation for and participation in the art of dance through excellence in performance, education, film, and artistic innovation.

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