



Press Release

Date: 23rd March 2017

Freefall Tour – A Young Carer Never Surrenders

Freefall – A Young Carer Never Surrenders, a play highlighting the issues and trials facing young carers on a daily basis. Freefall focuses on the story of Jas, as she shares her experience of supporting and caring for her mum and older sister since she was five years old.

The Children and Families Act and Care Act 2014 mean's that all young carers under the age of 18 have the right to an assessment based on the appearance of need. In its depiction of Jas' life, Freefall does three things: it significantly highlights the need, signposts where help may come from and raises a general awareness amongst teachers and young people as to the possibility that there are 'hidden' young carers amongst them.

In Hertfordshire in just one week:

Freefall toured to six schools and one arts venue

Age range was 80% Year 7 (Aged 11/12)

Audience numbers: 1010

Key quotes:

- Headmaster – “Some students have identified certain parts of the performance to their lives and others are more understanding and sympathetic to Young Carers needs.”
- Young Carer Pupil – “During the workshop some Year 7s really surprised me by how much they understood, it gave me goose bumps and made me want to cry. I have never thought that anyone would understand how alone I've felt. They were very mature in what they said with a good understanding of what young carers go through.”
- Local Politician - “I am aware of the numbers of young carers, but [Freefall] brings home the number of challenges they face, day in and day out”
- Funder – “I thought the production was absolutely fantastic. It far outweighed our expectations and it will have a lasting impact.”
- Please note quotes can be accredited on request.

Future plans:

Freefall will be back in schools in Suffolk this July when new dates may be available for Hertfordshire Schools. Beyond this we hope to tour the show to schools in the County from January 2018.

Further detail:

The professional theatre performance toured for one week to six secondary schools in St Albans, Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City, reaching over 1010 pupils: Stanborough School,



Sir Fredric Osborn School, Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School, Onslow St Audrey's School, Monk's Walk School and Samuel Ryder.

This part of the tour was made possible thanks to Chloe Robertson, Youth & Sports Partnerships Officer at Welwyn Hatfield Council and members of the Youth Council and Jo Askham at 1Life Leisure, St Albans.

Jas' story was created by Hertford based Theatre Director, Stuart Mullins and St Alban's based playwright, Anna Reynolds working with young adult carers from Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

It is estimated that there are over 3000 hidden young carers in the County. There are currently 700,000 young carers in England who remain unidentified. These children and young people are unidentified by their teachers and friends, who are unaware of their constant juggle of home, social and school life. One aim of the play is to help such young people understand there is help and support available, and that they will be valued for the amazing work they do.

At the heart of the work are the inspiring stories of the young carers themselves. Mullins says *"Young carers have forcefully told us two things: that they don't want our pity, but they do want nearly one million hidden young carers to be found and supported!"*

Feedback from teachers and audience members have included:

"An extremely powerful, dynamic and interesting production – learnt about the competing demands on a young carers life. Amazingly well done."

"I wanted to thank all involved in Freefall for the fantastic production. The students were completely engrossed and moved by the content and spectacular acting."

Unit Twenty Three, a Norfolk based social enterprise, has created new partnership with Carers in Hertfordshire and Centre 33 based in Cambridgeshire as well as Suffolk Family Carers, who all provide support services to young carers in their relevant counties. You can follow the progress of the tour and see what people are saying on twitter by using #FreefallU23.

We thank the funders of our 2017 touring work, which include, The Big Lottery Fund, Arts Council England, Unity Theatre Trust, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, St Albans District Council and Forest Heath District Council. We also thank our venues for their support.

For more details check the website freefalltour.uk

Contact:

A member of the Unit Twenty Three staff will be available for interview. If you have any questions, then please email Stuart Mullins stuart@unittwentythree.co.uk - 07974157039

Pictures

We have a selection of photos available that should be credited to Mark Finbow or Fiona Rigler. Please get in touch with Sally Zabroski on info@unittwentythree.co.uk.

