For Immediate Release

Livermore Valley Education Foundation Partners with Livermore Shakespeare Festival to Bring the Bard to Livermore Students

May 31, 2019 - Livermore, CA - Donned in paper crowns and donkey ears, second grade students perform warm-up exercises before their final classroom performance of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* – one of William Shakespeare’s beloved comedies where supernatural and mortal characters collide in a series of misunderstandings, mistaken identities, and mischief. Already quite familiar with the setting and context of the play, students were absorbed in embodying their characters, loosening up as they followed the lead of their teaching artists at the front of the class. Students let their arms sway up and down, projecting their voices, getting into the mindset of a noble fairy queen or a bumbling actor with a donkey’s head – characters both fantastical and human; a perfect fit for imaginative second graders dipping their toes into the work of Shakespeare for the first time.

The Livermore Valley Education Foundation (LVEF) has supported academics, athletics, and the arts in the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District (LVJUSD) since 1991. One of the partnerships that LVEF has nurtured for students, with the Livermore Shakespeare Festival (LSF), is the So Wise So Young program. The program brings teaching artists to LVJUSD second graders who read and learn about the works of William Shakespeare while preparing to act out a scene from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The program incorporates the play into the English Language Arts curriculum, allowing students to gain exposure to the Bard’s work early in their education in a way that allows them to play with the material, experience the fun they can have with language, and understand the story in its historical context.

By the time students are ready to perform their scene as a class, they display a keen understanding of their roles, where they belong on the stage, and what they mean as they deliver lines full of Shakespeare’s famously extensive vocabulary. While practicing the play increases the scope of student appreciation for language and verse, they also learn lessons in empathy as they inhabit their “character bodies” – in which they develop a sense of becoming someone else and appreciate the unique drama of another individual different than themselves.

LVEF – with its focus on allowing the arts to flourish in Livermore schools – funds around half the cost of the program. "LSF is honored to be a part of this great example of a successful community partnership,” said LSF Managing Director Katie Marcel. “Through a generous grant from the LVEF, Livermore Shakes is able to offer an equitable program to all of the second graders in the LVJUSD. We are so proud of this partnership, and hope that through the success of this program our community can find other opportunities for the nonprofit sector, the school district, and outside funders to augment the curriculum for our local kids."
“LVEF is involved in funding a variety of music and arts programs at LVJUSD, and So Wise So Young has been one we’ve remained committed to over the years,” said LVEF President Dana Rowley. “This program is our single biggest investment in the arts in the school system because we see it as having a widespread positive influence on students. This is something they’ll remember throughout their education. The results at the end of the program are very impressive – the students’ ability to engage on the subject will influence their outlook on Shakespeare for the rest of their lives.”

Rather than be intimidated by Shakespeare’s work as a common reading assignment, students are encouraged through So Wise So Young to connect with its playfulness, and the fantastical elements of the plays along with the personal. Doing so at an age when play, imagination, and curiosity are second nature breathes life into the plays that students will carry with them as they continue to discover his work throughout their education.

Watch students share their expertise of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as they recount the plot and recite lines.

Photos of So Wise So Young program courtesy of LSF and LVJUSD

###

**ABOUT LIVERMORE VALLEY JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

LVJUSD is an award-winning district that serves more than 13,900 students in transitional kindergarten through 12th grade at nine elementary campuses, two K-8 schools, three middle schools, two comprehensive high schools, and two alternative schools. The LVJUSD features International Baccalaureate Programmes and a STEM pathway, TK-12. The mission of the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District is to ensure each student will graduate with the skills needed to contribute and thrive in a changing world. For more information about the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District, please visit [www.livermoreschools.org](http://www.livermoreschools.org)

**ADDITIONAL CONTACTS:**

School Board President Craig Bueno, cbuenotrustee@lvjusd.org (925) 918-7345
Superintendent of Schools Kelly Bowers, Ed.D. kbowers@lvjusd.k12.ca.us (925) 606-3281
Director of Community Engagement Philomena Rambo, prambo@lvjusd.org (925) 960-2917