



For Immediate Release  
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## **Shakespeare in the Courts Honored as Outstanding Community Arts Project**

(Lenox, MA) – The Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) presented *Shakespeare in the Courts* with the MCC’s Gold Star Award for excellence in community arts and culture at the honoree’s performance of Shakespeare’s *Henry V* on May 11<sup>th</sup>. The project was also presented with a House Citation by Representative William Smitty Pignatelli.

*Shakespeare in the Courts* is a collaborative partnership between the Berkshire Juvenile Court and the professional theatre group [Shakespeare & Company](#). Adjudicated teens are “sentenced” to the project by the court and work with Shakespeare & Company artists to learn how to direct their emotions into a positive release by enacting Shakespeare’s plays. The program culminates in a final performance before family, friends and court personnel. Since beginning in 2001, over 165 at-risk youth have completed this extremely successful program.

“I am pleased the Massachusetts Cultural Council honored this creative local project with their Gold Star Award,” said Senator Benjamin B. Downing (D-Pittsfield). “Shakespeare in the Courts is an excellent example of how our local cultural councils and their partner institutions can use the arts to educate and inspire.” Senator Downing is the Senate Vice- Chair of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development. *Shakespeare in the Courts* was partially funded by the Pittsfield Cultural Council who also nominated the project for the Gold Star award.

The Gold Star Program annually recognizes model community arts, humanities and science projects funded by the 329 Local Cultural Councils (LCCs) across the state. These projects celebrate diversity, foster collaboration, showcase artistic excellence and provide learning experiences for people of all ages and backgrounds. *Shakespeare in the Courts* is one of 6 programs throughout the state to earn a Gold Star designation.

The LCC Program is the largest volunteer-run, grassroots arts funding program in the nation, supporting thousands of community-based projects in the arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences annually.

### **About the Massachusetts Cultural Council**

The Massachusetts Cultural Council promotes excellence, access, education and diversity in the arts, humanities and interpretive sciences, in order to improve the quality of life for all Massachusetts residents and contribute to the economic vitality of our communities.

The MCC is committed to building a central place for the arts, sciences and humanities in the everyday lives of communities across the Commonwealth. The Council pursues this mission through a combination of grant programs, partnerships, and services for nonprofit cultural organizations, schools, communities, and individual artists. The MCC receives an annual appropriation from the state Legislature and funds from the NEA, the Wallace Foundation, and other sources.