

HAMMER THEATRE CENTER HOSTS VIRTUAL LETTER-WRITING EVENT: LETTERS TO HEAL

INVITES PUBLIC TO TAKE PART
2:00pm-4:00pm, Saturday, February 6

SAN JOSE, CA (28 January 2021) – In response to the outpouring of support for its inaugural **Letters to Heal** event honoring the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, **Hammer Theatre Center** is presenting a new opportunity for the public to gather virtually and write cards and letters of encouragement to healthcare workers, patients fighting COVID-19, and isolated seniors in the community. Participants are invited to drop into a Zoom meeting at any point in the afternoon and join with Hammer’s staff members and other volunteers in creating notes of support, to assist in countering isolation, exhaustion, and those struggling with recovery from coronavirus. Volunteers provide their own “PPE” (Paper, Pen, and Envelopes), and Hammer staff will share inspiration, ideas, and information on where to send the letters. Since the event is held online, no masks are required, and snacks may or may not be available (guests can check their own kitchens), but a sense of community will definitely be in large supply. **Letters to Heal** will take place from **2:00pm-4:00pm, Saturday, February 6**. For more information or to register, the public may visit hammertheatre.com/letters-to-heal.

Hammer Theatre’s first **Letters to Heal** event was held January 18, 2021, on Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. The event saw 165 participants banding together in support of the community, gathering safely online to serve the need for support and encouragement while also honoring the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. Hammer staff and volunteers offered up fun examples and inspiration to participants, as well as information on addresses for local hospitals and care facilities where they could mail their cards and letters.

The events are the inspiration of Maria Bones, Director of Patron Services at the Hammer Theatre Center, who was looking for a way to give back on the MLK Day of Service, and also to re-engage the theatre's core of volunteers, some 75 locals who help with ushering, seating patrons, and handing out programs when the theatre is open. Said Bones, "As a theatre, our mission is to bring people together. Since we can't safely gather in person right now, this seemed a great way to both bring our own community together and do some good." To her surprise and delight, the MLK event attracted far more than the Hammer's core volunteers, with 165 participants joining from as far away as Nevada. Through follow ups, she has learned that hundreds of cards and notes were sent as a result of the initial meeting.

In creating this event Bones also reached out to local hospitals and senior facilities to gauge interest in the project, and found the response was enthusiastic. "They were thrilled to hear their workers, patients, and isolated seniors, who are under extraordinary burdens including extreme isolation, would be receiving words of encouragement, and told us they would be happy to distribute the letters to their caregivers, patients, and residents."

Owned by the City of San Jose and operated by San Jose State University, the **Hammer Theatre Center** is a state-of-the-art performance venue located in the heart of downtown San Jose. The Hammer's latest tech innovations including cameras and switching equipment, crowdfunded by the community and installed over the summer, allow the venue to offer its community vibrant productions through at-home streaming while large public gatherings are prohibited. It will enable the theatre to offer hybrid live/home viewing in the future, when only smaller groups may be allowed in the audience, and potentially expand ongoing accessibility to anyone unable to attend a live event in person. The 528-seat theatre has presented an array of offerings including outstanding professional productions, community-based works, SJSU shows, and concerts, as well as dance, music, talks, film screenings—even live aerial performances with dancers suspended outside, scaling the sides of the iconic blue building. In its last complete season before the coronavirus shutdown, the Hammer presented nearly 200 public events, drawing more than 57,000 audience members. From jazz performances to mariachi

extravaganzas, the popular *National Geographic Live!* speaker series to the acclaimed *National Theatre Live* film screenings, Cinequest film festival presentations, ballet and modern dance shows, kid-friendly performances, live art and more, the Hammer's mission is to serve the community through artistic and educational programming that express the unique characteristics and diverse cultures of Silicon Valley.

For Calendar Editors

WHAT: In response to the outpouring of support for its inaugural **Letters to Heal** event honoring the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, **Hammer Theatre Center** is presenting a new opportunity for the public to gather virtually and write cards and letters of encouragement to healthcare workers, patients fighting COVID-19, and isolated seniors in the community. Participants are invited to drop into a Zoom meeting at any point in the afternoon and join with Hammer's staff members and other volunteers in creating notes of support, to assist in countering isolation, exhaustion, and those struggling with recovery from coronavirus. Volunteers provide their own "PPE" (Paper, Pen, and Envelopes), and Hammer staff will share inspiration, ideas, and information on where to send the letters. Since the event is held online, no masks are required, and snacks may or may not be available (guests can check their own kitchens), but a sense of community will definitely be in large supply

WHERE: Online – registrants will be sent a Zoom link to participate.

WHEN: **2:00pm-4:00pm, Saturday, February 6**

INFO: For more information or to register, the public may visit hammertheatre.com/letters-to-heal.

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PRESS: Contact Steph Keay, Carla Befera & Co.
(650) 687-7830 | steph@cb-pr.com

PHOTOS: Media may download high-res photos at:
<http://www.cbpr.co/press/hammer2021>