



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Emmy Award-winning tap dancer Jason Samuels Smith featured at

FALL FUNDRAISER

To share COCA's mission and raise Urban Arts and Scholarship funds.

WHO/WHAT: COCA Fall Fundraiser 2009

Be uplifted and astounded by tap sensation Jason Samuels Smith and his super-troupe A.C.G.I. (Anybody Can Get It) featuring some of the best feet in the business. A prodigy when cast in Savion Glover's Broadway hit *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk* at age 15, Smith went on to become an Emmy Award-winner, television and feature film star, director and choreographer, carrying on the great tradition of tap. Audiences may recognize Smith as a featured guest performer on the hit television show *So You Think You Can Dance*.

Samuel Smiths' motto of "Anybody Can Get It," ties into what COCA is all about. Everyday, COCA welcomes diverse members of our community to participate in dance, music, theatre and the visual arts, supporting our core mission to "enrich lives and build community through the arts." The performance will bring together a talented and successful professional artist and demonstrate the mentoring process that COCA provides to young people, especially those who would not otherwise have an opportunity for an arts education.

In addition to sharing COCA's mission in a profound way, the purpose of the evening is to raise funds for COCA's Urban Arts Program and Scholarship Fund, helping COCA to provide \$500,000 in outreach and \$150,000 in financial aid. The Urban Arts Program is a multi-faceted outreach program of arts instruction, performances, and workshops offered in school and after-school to approximately 3,000 students in the St. Louis City Schools.

WHEN: Friday, November 20 – 6:00-11:30 p.m.

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WHERE: COCA, 524 Trinity Avenue, University City off the Delmar Loop.

COST: Tickets for The Fall Fundraiser are \$250-\$650. Tickets for both events are available by contacting Gina Wake at gwake@COCAstl.org or by calling 314.725.1834, x144.

CHAIRS: Honorary chairs for the event are St. Louis Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Kelvin Adams and Dr. Karen S. Collins. Event co-chairs are Vickie Newton and Dwayne Butler, Cheri and Ron Fromm, and Glenda and Jim Seldin. The scholarship chair is Bill Carson, and the quiet auction chair is Pat Whiteside.

DETAILS: As part of the Fall Fundraiser's program, COCA will present the Ferring Award for Philanthropy to The Monsanto Fund, and the Volunteer of the Year Award to Cary Schneithorst Wolfner.

Since 1992, the Urban Arts Program has made arts education, performances, and hands-on experiences available to more than 45,000 children who would not have had access to such programs. The program provides \$500,000 in free programming to boys and girls, ages 6 to 17, living in underserved communities in the St. Louis metropolitan area.

Each year, the COCA Scholarship Fund administers approximately \$150,000 in assistance to students for classes and camps at COCA's University City site. Valuing diversity as a source of vitality and strength for any dynamic community arts center, COCA attracts students from a variety of cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, and family experiences. These programs are supported through generous donations made by individuals, corporations, and foundations.

PHOTOS: **High-resolution photos** are available upon request by contacting Lori Otta at lotta@COCAstl.org or calling 314.725.1834 x137.

Founded in 1986, COCA's mission is to enrich lives and build community through the arts. COCA's programs include The COCA Family Theatre Series, presenting nationally recognized artists in its 400-seat theatre; educational classes, camps, and workshops in dance, music, drama, and visual arts, serving individuals aged six months through adult; artists' residencies; and exhibits of contemporary art in the Millstone Gallery. COCA's award-winning outreach program, Urban Arts, provides free arts education to low-income students throughout St. Louis. For more information about COCA, please visit its website at www.COCAstl.org

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