



NEWS RELEASE

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\$5 MILLION GIFT FROM BERGES FAMILY FOUNDATION MARKS MAJOR MILESTONE IN COCA'S CREATE OUR FUTURE CAMPAIGN

The Foundation has Committed to Match Donations, Dollar for Dollar, Up to \$5 Million

(ST. LOUIS, MO) – COCA-Center of Creative Arts announced today the Berges Family Foundation has pledged \$5 million to the Create our Future Campaign, representing the largest gift ever for the Foundation and equal to the largest COCA has received to date. Presented in the form of a challenge, the Foundation will match dollar for dollar gifts made to the Campaign by September 30, 2017.

“We wanted to make a bold statement in support of COCA and energize the St. Louis community to join us,” said Jim Berges. “This organization has been doing vital work for our community for 30 years – using the arts to impact our schools, to create pathways of success for thousands of young people, and to grow in its role as one of the top arts organizations in the country.”

Berges continued, “COCA demonstrates three things which are key to the success of non-profits – solid financial management and stewardship, strong leadership, and deep impact that goes beyond the surface to truly transforms lives. I view this as a solid investment in the future of an organization that is critical to St. Louis.”

The Berges family and their Foundation have a long history of giving to the arts. The Foundation’s mission is to support the institutions and organizations that make St. Louis a great place to live, visit, and invest, with contributions for cultural engagement; STEM preparedness; youth empowerment; and support for heroes and first responders.

Announced by COCA early in 2017, the \$40 million Create Our Future Campaign will raise \$27 million for the capital renovation and expansion of COCA’s historic building in University City and \$13 million to fund its endowment and reserves. To date, COCA has raised more than \$25 million from private sources – with 100 percent of its Board of Directors, Campaign Steering Committee, Associate Board, and staff contributing. With the completion of this landmark challenge, COCA will be in position to achieve its goal.

“We are incredibly grateful to the Berges family for this profound statement of confidence in our project and in COCA’s future, and we are excited to rise to the challenge,” said Kelly Pollock, COCA Executive Director. “This ambitious project positions COCA to meet evolving community needs and serve our growing student base, while also sustaining our long-term commitment to ensuring access.”

A new state-of-the-art theatre, planned as a critical component of the COCA expansion, will be named in honor of the Berges Family Foundation.

“We have such fond memories of attending COCA performances as a family when our now 30-year-old son, Kevin, was younger,” said Cathy Berges. “We are delighted that, through this gift, we will help provide other families the chance to enjoy theatre together, and also help COCA greatly expand its capacity to produce excellent theatre and dance performances.”

Launched quietly in early 2015, the Campaign is spearheaded by a 14-member Steering Committee chaired by Cheryl Holman, with Honorary Chairs Alison and John Ferring.

Other lead gifts include \$5 million from Alison and John Ferring, a \$3 million lead corporate gift from Centene Charitable Foundation, \$2 million gifts from Cheryl Holman, David Joyner and Bill Lawton, and Carol and Michael Staenberg, and \$1 million gifts from Jennifer and Tom Hillman, Jane and Dave Peacock, and Edward Jones.

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About The Berges Family Foundation

The Berges Family Foundation supports the institutions and organizations that make Saint Louis a great place to live, visit, and invest, with contributions for cultural engagement; STEM preparedness; youth empowerment; and support for our heroes and first responders.

About COCA

Founded in 1986, COCA is the fourth largest multidisciplinary community arts center in the country and a national leader in innovative arts education. With a mission to enrich lives and build community through the arts, COCA serves 50,000 people of all ages and skill levels, from enthusiastic amateurs to emerging professionals — all taught by a faculty of distinguished arts educators. We provide meaningful arts experiences in our own studios, gallery and theatres as well as in schools, community centers and corporate settings in order to build a vibrant St. Louis that is creative, connected and inclusive. To ensure diversity and inclusion in all of our programs we are committed to eliminating economic and social barriers to participation in the arts.