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***Near West Theatre and May Dugan Center Present Hearts Wide Open
A Special Collaboration Celebrating Community and Storytelling***

CLEVELAND – March 26, 2026 – Near West Theatre, in partnership with May Dugan Center’s Seniors on the Move! program, proudly presents “Hearts Wide Open,” a deeply personal and uplifting performance created and performed by senior participants. Performances will take place on April 23 at 6:30 PM at the May Dugan Center, located at 4115 Bridge Ave., and on April 24 at 2 PM at Near West Theatre, located at 6702 Detroit Ave. Tickets are \$5 and can be purchased at May Dugan Center or by calling Near West Theatre’s Box Office at 216-961-6391, weekdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The curated, one-of-a-kind performance, made possible with generous support from The McGregor Foundation and the Ohio Arts Council, will explore life’s many turns, guiding the audience through shared memories and experiences as the seniors take them down memory lane reflecting on the importance of resilience, community, and identity.

“This performance is unique because it is devised from the personal stories and lived experiences of the participants,” said Dani Schmaltz, Program Manager at Near West Theatre. “We provide the foundation, but the seniors are truly at the helm of this creative process to shape the final product. It’s thrilling to walk into this project not having an exact road map of where we might end up.”

The collaboration grew out of a Near West Theatre Creative Aging residency launched last year between the two organizations. What began as a short-term engagement quickly revealed something deeper.

“After the first session, it became clear that something meaningful was happening in the room,” said Trinidad Snider, Artistic Director at Near West Theatre. “Participants began sharing their own memories and life stories alongside the creative activities, which sparked the idea for a longer residency that would give those voices more space to be heard. “Hearts Wide Open” grew out of that moment.”

Rooted in shared values, the partnership between Near West Theatre and May Dugan Center reflects a mutual commitment to strengthening community by creating meaningful opportunities for well-being, connection, and creativity.

“This partnership reflects the power of community, bringing together the arts and social services to create enriching experiences for our Seniors on the Move! Participants,” said Andy Trares, Executive Director of May Dugan Center. “We are proud to work alongside Near West Theatre to expand what’s possible for older adults.”

As a West Side staple, Near West Theatre offers intergenerational theater experiences that empower individuals and bring people of all ages together. These experiences complement May Dugan Center’s Senior Wellness Program by promoting social engagement, creativity, and emotional well-being among older adults. By connecting seniors with vibrant community arts programs, both organizations help reduce isolation, encourage lifelong learning, and support a healthier, more connected community.

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[TOMBSTONE INFO]

“Hearts Wide Open”

Creative Partnership Performance with Near West Theatre and May Dugan Center

Runtime: 45 Minutes

Performance Dates

Thurs. April 23 – 6:30 PM at May Dugan Center, 4115 Bridge Ave., Cleveland, Ohio 44113

Fri. April 24 – 2:00 PM at Near West Theatre, 6702 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, Ohio 44102

Suggested Performance Listing

“Hearts Wide Open” will be performed on April 23 at the May Dugan Center (4115 Bridge Ave.; limited seating available) and April 24 at Near West Theatre (6702 Detroit Ave.). Tickets are \$5 general admission. To purchase tickets for the April 23 performance, contact Vanessa Jackson at vjackson@maydugacenter.org or Dante Basista dbasista@maydugacenter.org. For April 24 tickets, visit nearwesttheatre.org or call the box office at 216-961-6392.