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Media Contacts:

Cindy Moran, PR Consultant, cmoran@firststage.org or 414-405-6290

Jennifer Hubbartt, Marketing and Communications Director, jhubbartt@firststage.org or 414-267-2932

First Stage Breaks Fundraising Record at Annual Wine Tasting & Dinner Event

Milwaukee, WI – December 12, 2022 – On Saturday, November 5, 2022, First Stage hosted its 13th Annual Wine Tasting & Dinner at The Wisconsin Club – Country Club, the first time the event has been held at the venue. 119 guests were treated to a sumptuous wine tasting and menu imagined by **Chef Brandon Reid** of the Wisconsin Club – Country Club and **Chef David Magnasco** of The Chef’s Table. The theme was Carnevale di Venezia/Venetian Masquerade; guests were encouraged to wear Venetian masks as they took part in the evening’s festivities.

The event began with an exclusive wine tasting, hors d’oeuvres, silent auction and raffle, followed by a five-course dinner paired with selected wines. Event Co-Chair **Tim Lantz** led the event’s live auction and Artistic Director **Jeff Frank** exceeded the goal of raising \$18,000 during the appeal.

In total, the event raised more than **\$122,000** to support First Stage’s mission of *transforming lives through theater*. These funds will benefit First Stage’s professional theater productions, Theater Academy programming and Theater in Education programs. The event has raised more than \$928,920 over its 13-year history.

Managing Director **Betsy Corry** shared the importance of this event and the crucial role it plays in fulfilling First Stage’s mission: “Our Wine Tasting & Dinner is First Stage’s singular adults-only event where business leaders and parents alike enjoy a unique and intimate evening to support our mission. The proceeds from this annual event allows First Stage to provide accessible ticket prices for our professional theater productions, underwrite our arts integration programming in City of Milwaukee schools and provide need-based scholarships so tuition never stands in the way of a young person attending our Theater Academy.”

The Premier Sponsors for the event were **BMO Wealth Management** and **Johnson Controls**. Corporate Table sponsors included: Bella Via Dance Studio, LLC and Physicians Realty Trust. Course Sponsors: Amy and Bob Arzbaeher. Wine Tasting Sponsors: Hunzinger Construction Company, Melissa and Patrick Horne, Milwaukee Bucks, Mikkelson Builders and Well Family Chiropractic. Additional Support: Beechwood Sales and Service, Capitol-Husting Company, Inc. Wine & Liquor Co. and The Chef's Table.

The 2022 Co-Chairs for the event were **Megan and Tim Lantz**. The Committee included: Bob Arzbaeher, Sally Cartwright, Secily Clason, Dan Grenda, David Magnasco, Melissa Nelsen, Corrie Prunuske and Gail Teigeiro.

The event also included performances by First Stage's Young Company Students, **Angel Rivera** and **Leo Madson**, (who will both be appearing in First Stage's upcoming production of THE HOBBIT in early February 2023) and Bella Via Dance Studio, LLC (choreography by **Alyssa Albers**).

Event photos and photo credits can be found here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Kuw1staHTWRgmw_b_WCQJtkBxooG4EOM?usp=share_link

Mark your calendars! Next year's Wine Tasting & Dinner will be held on **Saturday, November 4, 2023**.

To learn more about First Stage and its current and upcoming productions, please visit: firststage.org or call **(414) 267-2961**.

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About First Stage

Founded in 1987, First Stage is one of the nation's leading theaters for young people and families, and a driving force behind the creation of the best and most innovative plays for family audiences, theater training programs for young people and education initiatives for its schools and community. First Stage ensures that all programming is not only accessible to its community but that it is reflective of the community it serves.

First Stage produces plays that honor the young person's point of view, include diverse and traditionally underrepresented voices and inspire meaningful conversations. First Stage has presented more than 70 world premiere productions that address important subject matters relevant to today's youth. The Theater Academy is one of the nation's largest high-impact theater training programs for young people (3 – 18 years old). Through a challenging curriculum taught by professional teaching artists, the Academy nurtures life skills through stage skills and includes the Next Steps Program that tailors Theater Academy classes to the needs of young people on the autism spectrum and with other developmental disabilities. As

Wisconsin's leader in arts-integrated education in schools, First Stage's dynamic Theater in Education Programs cleverly blend theater activities with standard curriculum – allowing more than 10,000 students annually to learn traditional academic subjects through creativity and self-expression.

First Stage is a member of TYA/USA, the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the Wisconsin Alliance for Arts Education, Milwaukee Arts Partners and is a cornerstone member of the United Performing Arts Fund (UPAF). firststage.org