

New Paradigm Theatre to Receive \$10,000 Challenge America Award from the National Endowment for the Arts

Stratford, CT—**New Paradigm Theatre** is pleased to announce it has been approved by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for a Challenge America award of \$10,000 for the second year in a row! This grant will support their “Sustainable Harmony” program and summer production of *Hairspray*. The NEA will award 272 Challenge America awards nationwide totaling \$2,720,000 as part of the recent announcement of fiscal year 2025 grants. New Paradigm Theatre was one of only 16 nonprofits in CT to win this award.

“The NEA is proud to continue our nearly 60 years of supporting the efforts of organizations and artists that help to shape our country’s vibrant arts sector and communities of all types across our nation,” said NEA Chair Maria Rosario Jackson, PhD. “It is inspiring to see the wide range of creative projects taking place, including **New Paradigm Theatre.**”

“We are so honored to receive this grant from the NEA again this year.” says Kristin Huffman, Artistic director and Broadway veteran. “Last year we were able to include more in-need youth by helping them with transportation to the program and shows. This year we will also use it to help us fund our “Equality for All” workshops that coordinate with our production of *Hairspray* in August.”

“We are very grateful to the NEA and very proud to be receiving this prestigious grant again. We see it as recognition that we have been putting our mission into real action”, said NPT Board Chairman Mark Holleran.

The New Paradigm Theatre Company collaborates with a social justice nonprofit organization for each production. This partnership aligns with the theme of the show and aims to raise awareness and support the mission and activities of the organization. An additional bonus this year! **Creating True Equality workshops for our students.**

In the Summer of 2025, New Paradigm Theatre (NPT) will produce the lively musical *Hairspray*. This show takes place in 1962 Baltimore, where teenagers fight for racial integration on their favorite TV program, promoting equal rights for all. As we prepare for this production, we want to give our community the tools to talk about racial and other discrimination. To support this effort, we’re thrilled to work with NPT Board Member Dr. Rydell Harrison, a dedicated educator from Partners for Educational Leadership to lead Equity and Inclusion workshops for our youth participants. These workshops will help our students express themselves as community leaders.

For the next six months, we will focus on using the spirit of *Hairspray* to challenge discrimination and promote equality in Fairfield County. In March, Dr. Harrison will train 15-20 of our most engaged youth in these leadership workshops. These students will then run peer-to-peer presentations in schools starting in April. We already have three local schools ready to partner with us, and we hope to reach even more! Our student leaders will also present these presentations as “Talk Backs” at each of our shows. Our workshops will help students understand equality provide tools to address bias, and create a sense of belonging in their schools. We look forward to this exciting journey!

New Paradigm Theatre Company is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit theatre promoting social responsibility and fostering creative problem solvers, leaders, and global citizens through theatre arts education and productions. www.nptheatre.org

For more information on other projects included in the NEA's grant announcement, visit arts.gov/news.