



Media Release

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Heartland Family Service Ruth K. Solomon Girls Center Celebrates 40th Anniversary with Arts Performance

The Ruth K. Solomon Girls Center, the oldest girls center in Omaha, celebrated its 40th anniversary with a performance by more than 100 of its members on August 4, 2006. The performance was held at Marian High School as the culmination of the Center's summer program, and was attended by about 150 guests. The Ruth K. Solomon Girls Center is a program of Heartland Family Service, and is located at 6720 North 30th Street, as part of the Heartland Family Service North Office.

In 1966, the Center was founded as the Kellom Girls Club, a neighborhood project organized by residents of Hilltop-Pleasantview Public Homes. The residents wanted a place where girls could gather; learn homemaking skills; and develop poise, self-discipline and leadership skills. It was the first girls' center ever established in Omaha. The club was transferred to a building in Logan Fontenelle Public Homes in 1973, when Heartland Family Service accepted the administration of the Club from the YWCA. In 1979, The Club moved to 1601 North 22 Street, and in 1986, the center was renamed to honor Ruth K. Solomon, a co-founder and major benefactor of the program.

In 1991, the future of the Solomon Girls Center became uncertain due to the possibility that United Way of the Midlands could discontinue funding the program. Prompted by Omaha Housing Authority plans to demolish the Logan Fontenelle Homes—which included the building that housed the program—United Way conducted a study to assess the best way to fund services for girls in North Omaha. The Solomon Advisory Committee called a press conference to build support for continued UWM funding, which was granted that fall.

This is the second summer that Marian High School has hosted the Solomon Summer Program, in a unique collaboration that began in 2005 as a partnership with Heartland Family Service, Marian High School and the Peter Kiewit Foundation. This partnership provides a variety of field trips and spacious facilities including a technology center, performing arts auditorium and gymnasium, thus expanding

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our previous summer program to serve a larger number of girls with more activities. The Solomon Summer Program was the first partnership of its kind in the North Omaha community and was a tremendous success.

The program runs daily from June to August, and culminates in a recital that allows the girls to showcase the skills and talents they have developed over the summer. The Solomon Summer Program uses social, recreational, and educational encounters in the arts to build self-esteem, self-confidence, and responsibility while giving girls an opportunity to receive positive reinforcement from peers and adult contacts.

Thanks to a bequest from Mrs. Ruth K. Solomon in 1987, we are able to offer annual scholarships to members or former members of the center. The scholarship program has served two important functions—not only to help high school graduates who are unable to afford the total cost of post-secondary education, but also to create a desire in the younger girls to succeed in school and aspire to a career. Annually, two members or former members of the center are awarded \$1,000 scholarships each to pursue their education. In 1999, the Faye Douglas Perseverance Award was established to honor two current members in grades kindergarten through 11th for exceptional personal growth. Faye Douglas served as the Program Coordinator for the Center for over 20 years and now serves as a member of the Scholarship Committee.

The Heartland Family Service Solomon Girls Center provides enriching after-school and summer opportunities to nearly 200 female members ages 5-18 years. This historic north Omaha institution provides activities and guidance to help each of our girls to find her own identity, and to develop a sense of responsibility to herself, her family and her community. The skills that our girls gain follow them through school and into their adult lives.



1) Ms. Elizabeth Kisch, Head of Marian High School, speaks to the girls at the 2006 Solomon Summer Performance at Marian High School.



4) Tierra Richardson & Saschel Rumley greet guests at the Solmon Girls Center Summer Performance.



2) Mia Matlock, pianist from the teen group and a Solomon Summer Program member.



5) Members of our eight- & nine-year-old group perform a dance number.



3) Jocelyn Metcalf, violinist and member of the Solomon Girls Center Summer Program.



6) Mariah Turner, a member of our 10 & 11- year-old group, performs in silence as a mime.



9) Our seven-year-old group dons cat costumes to perform a dance rendition of *The Lion King*.



7) Members of the five & six-year-old group raise their voices in song.



10) Members of our seven-year-old group eagerly await their turn to perform!



8) This Solomon Girl is on the prowl!