



NORMAL nonprofit

NEWS RELEASE

NORMAL is a national nonprofit organization that educates about eating disorders, body image and self-esteem through arts and mindfulness programs.

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## **NORMAL Non-profit Brings Award-Winning Program and Rock Musical To Spartanburg, SC, Schools to Educate on Eating Disorders**

*Timely educational theatre performances coincide with eating disorder awareness campaign*

**New York, NY** -- NORMAL, a national non-profit organization that uses arts and mindfulness programs to educate on eating disorders, body image and self-esteem issues, announced today it will feature its NORMAL in Schools (NIS) program in Spartanburg during the week of February 27<sup>th</sup> - March 3<sup>rd</sup> to educate students, faculty, and families on eating disorders, which studies show to be the # 1 cause of death of all mental illnesses. The NIS program consists of a live performance of a Jonathan Larson award-winning Off-Broadway rock musical **nor.mal:**, a talkback, and related 90-page curriculum.

The 60-minute live performance of **nor.mal: the musical** tells the true story of a family torn apart by an eating disorder through the eyes of the mother. Written by New York Foundation Artists & Art award winner Yvonne Adrian, Broadway veteran actress and writer Cheryl Stern, and Emmy award-winning composer Tom Kochan, **nor.mal:** is a dynamic, fresh, and fast-paced rock musical characterized by episodic scenes, stylization, and deeply resonant storytelling. **nor.mal:** is a highly artistic theatrical work meant not only to raise awareness of eating disorders and stress management, but also to demonstrate the healing power of theatre itself.

"The NIS program teaches about much more than eating disorders," said Husa, who holds a Masters in Fine Arts from the University of Virginia and is an E-RYT certified yoga instructor with the Yoga Alliance. "Among many things, it encourages communities to employ healthy 'norms' for managing stress."

Startling, little-known facts on eating disorders include:

- 25 million Americans struggle with an eating disorder (source: NEDA, BEDA)
- 7 million of those struggling with eating disorders are males (source: National Association for Males with Eating Disorders)
- Eating disorders are the leading cause of death of any psychiatric illness (source: National Institute of Mental Health)

Prior to founding the NORMAL non-profit, Husa began her career as an actress, co-founding the Drama Desk and Obie-award winning Transport Group Theatre Company in New York in 2001, and originally producing NORMAL THE MUSICAL Off-Broadway in 2005. In a 2005 review, the *New York Post* wrote "[NORMAL] is a feel-good musical ...[that] shows that any subject, if handled right, is grist for the musical mill." *Variety* magazine followed with "Let's wrap this up and send it out to schools where it can do the most good."

The live musical production is being produced, directed, and acted by a local Spartanburg cast and crew, overseen by Husa. The idea to present the musical in honor of eating disorder awareness week was sparked at a visit to a Colorado eating disorder facility, where Husa met Heidi Moss, a



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Spartanburg therapist who specializes in Eating Disorders. Moss was invited to come on board as NORMAL Program Director, South Carolina and subsequently connected with Valerie Barnett, drama teacher at Spartanburg Day School, to help produce the project. Barnett, who plays the central role of Kayla in the musical, said "Arts-based education of this nature is crucial in schools and it is my hope that 'Normal' can bring a message of hope and healing to many families."

Wofford College student Blair Cadden learned of the NORMAL project and offered to direct the musical, receiving guidance from Hussa. The local cast and crew will travel with the show to Spartanburg schools and public spaces. See below for full schedule of shows:

- February 27th at 7:30pm at Wofford College in the McMillian Theater. Open to Wofford faculty and students only.
- February 28th at 7:00pm at Converse College in the Hazel B. Abbott Theater. Open to Converse faculty and students only.
- March 1st at 7:30pm at Hub Bub Showroom. Doors open at 7:00pm; Open to the public.
- March 13th at 7:00pm at University of South Carolina-Upstate in the Ballroom. Open to Upstate faculty and students only.
- March 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm at Spartanburg Day School in the Commons, Sponsored by Veritas Collaborative Center of Excellence for the Treatment of Eating Disorders. Open to Day School faculty, students and parents only.
- March 17th at 3:00pm in the Spartanburg Main Library in the Barnett Room. Open to the public.
- Public School participation is still in the works (TBD).

The crowning point of the Spartanburg troupe's series of shows will be a featured performance in Charleston at the International Association of Eating Disorder Professionals (iaedp) national conference. This final performance will be on March 23<sup>rd</sup> at 8pm at the Marriott and is open to the public.

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NORMAL is a national non-profit arts-and-education organization that educates about eating disorders, body image and self-esteem through arts and mindfulness programs. It offers an array of resources and programs – one of which brings the NIS Program (a hip musical "NORMAL", a related curriculum, panel of medical experts, and persons in recovery) to schools, and that has clinically shown to inspire individuals into treatment. NORMAL was founded by Robyn Hussa, a 2010 recipient of the Champion in Women's Health Award by Sue Ann Thompson's Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation.



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Please call Heidi Moss at 316-6835 for information about Spartanburg presentations.