



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 26, 2007

Contact: Amy Gerald,
Communications Manager
469-916-9802 or agerald@bigthought.org

Julia Burton
MA/MBA Candidate, Arts Administration
Southern Methodist University
jeburton@mail.smu.edu

Andrea Hugg
Director of Strategic Marketing, SMU Cox
ahugg@cox.smu.edu

Local at-risk youth showcase their artistic talents at Southern Methodist University ***SNEAK PEEK AT THE 2007 CREATIVE SOLUTIONS PRODUCTION***

DALLAS (SMU) - Southern Methodist University and Big Thought are partnering this summer to present Creative Solutions, an arts education program for at-risk youth in Dallas County.

A Sneak Peek event and cookout planned by SMU's Business and Arts Administration graduate students (MA/MBAs) will take place on campus in the Bob Hope Lobby at the Meadows School of the Arts on July 26, 2007, beginning at 12:45 p.m. Students, instructors, and administrators will be on hand to give interviews, followed by opportunities to view the art that has been created and watch an open rehearsal of the theatrical production, entitled "Our Book of Life."

The goal of Creative Solutions is to find an artistic and educational outlet that will help keep these youth out of the juvenile system and set them on the path to higher education and a career. Big Thought and SMU are bridging the gap between these at-risk youth and the surrounding community in order to encourage diversity and interactive artistic experiences.

"It is important to let our young people know that where you have been does not determine who you can become. SMU Meadows School of the Arts is proud to be part of the most successful program in the country for youth under pressure and allow them to dream beyond their environment. These students have great potential and all they need is for someone to believe in them," said José Antonio Bowen, Dean of the Meadows School of the Arts.

The MA/MBAs are serving as a liaison between the Meadows School, the Cox School and Big Thought to help promote the Creative Solutions program.

"The Cox MA/MBA program is one of the nation's only graduate programs that provides a joint degree based upon the philosophy that a successful career in arts management requires a thorough knowledge of contemporary business practices coupled with a deep appreciation for the arts," said Steve Denson, Director of Diversity for SMU's Cox School of Business.

Big Thought's Director of Programs Lisa Schmidt notes, "Big Thought is grateful for this new partnership with SMU. The University's support shows the students that the community believes in their future and is willing to give them an opportunity to express their opinions and emotions in a safe, supervised environment."

The premiere performance of "Our Book of Life" and gallery exhibit will take place in the Margo Jones Theater and Doolin Gallery at the Meadows School of the Arts on August 9 at 1:00 p.m.

The performance will feature hip hop dancing, original music, and spoken word poetry all based on true stories from the students' lives. The gallery exhibit features charcoal drawings, watercolor, mixed media, clay, painted glass, and photography.

Big Thought wishes to express its appreciation to the following sponsors for Creative Solutions: Presenting Sponsor Darden Restaurants Foundation; SMU; Dallas County Juvenile Department; IBM; Hot Topic Foundation; City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs; National Endowment for the Arts; MR & Evelyn Hudson Foundation; Texas Commission on the Arts; Harold Simmons Foundation; PricewaterhouseCoopers; Embrey Family Foundation; Dr. Bob and Jean Smith Foundation; and Jane Wetzel.

SMU's MA/MBA students would also like to thank the Highland Park United Methodist Church who will donate and serve food at the Sneak Peak event and cookout, with additional financial support from the Cox School of Business at SMU; the Meadows School of the Arts; Raising Cane's; and Mr. Gatti's Pizza for their support and encouragement of the program and its participants.

###

About Big Thought

Big Thought is one of the largest non-profit learning partnerships in the nation, inspiring, empowering, and uniting children and communities through education, arts and culture. Formed in 1987, the Dallas, Texas-based organization offers a diverse array of arts and culture-based performances, workshops, cultural excursions and multi-visit residencies for children and teens, and provides professional development and training to help adults use these programs. Big Thought's programs reach an average of 650,000 students, teachers and family members each year in schools, libraries, museums, juvenile facilities and community centers. More information can be found at www.bightought.org.

About Creative Solutions

Creative Solutions, winner of the 2004 President's Committee on Arts and the Humanities Coming Up Taller Award, is Big Thought's nationally recognized program for at-risk teens. The innovative, alternative art education program allows at-risk teens the opportunity to work with professional visual and performing artists who instruct, inspire, and serve as role models. Since its inception in 1993, Creative Solutions in partnership with the Dallas County Juvenile Department has served more than 23,000 teens. More information can be found at www.bightought.org.

About SMU's MA/MBA Program

SMU's innovative combination of courses in both business and the arts, as well as internships and intensive experience with arts organizations and their particular challenges, creates graduates who are well-prepared to hold leadership positions in arts, entertainment, education and non-profit organizations around the world. Underlying the academic program is an appreciation for the "practical" nature of arts administration. Because preserving and presenting quality arts experiences calls for skilled and strategic management, students are required to participate in practical Dallas-area art organizations and a full-time summer internship in Dallas or elsewhere in the United States. These practical, hands-on experiences allow students to apply classroom knowledge in real situations, and are a highly valued element of the MA/MBA experience. Please visit <http://www.cox.smu.edu/grad/mba/mamba> for additional information.