



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## THE THERAPY DOGS TAKE CENTER STAGE

SPRINGFIELD, VA (April 3, 2018) *All About Dogs* Features Dog-Therapy Teams & Performers With & Without Disability

Celebrating the myriad ways dogs and their humans lift up, love and take care of one another, *All About Dogs* – staged this spring by the Mighty Voice Liberation Ensemble – explores dog-related employment opportunities for people with disability. The cast includes both professional performers and people with intellectual and physical disability. Together they devised this original production, each contributing their unique perspectives.

## WOOF: HOW WE BUILT THIS SHOW

“Our performance project began last fall with creative research – a series of rehearsals with dog-care professionals. We asked them what they like about their work and what skills it takes to be good at their job,” *All About Dogs* director Margot Greenlee explains. Among the professionals:

- Dog therapy teams Terry Patton & Lulu and Kris Campesi & her dog Nic
- Dogtopia’s owner/groomer Amber Sutton and her dog Zeke
- Brad Weeks, Master Police Officer of the Fairfax County Police Department, and his police dogs, Kodiak & Juneau
- Veterinarian Caitlin Love

Along with partners from the Key Center School, the cast spent a day volunteering at the Alexandria Animal Welfare League. “Following each encounter, we transformed those interactions into the songs, dances, and script that make up *All About Dogs*,” shares Greenlee.

The performers have taken their experiences with the dog experts and the animals themselves into exciting creative directions, building confidence and developing new skills. “I’m able to lead and feel independent,” says one; “I like to do the beat-boxing solo,” adds another.

## BARK: SIT, STAND, ROLL OVER WITH US

As an audience member at *All About Dogs*, you’ll be invited to talk with a partner, join in songs and dances, learn the dos and don’ts of meeting a new dog for the first time, and understand nuances of terms like ‘improvise’ and ‘harmony.’ By the end of the show, you will have a deeper appreciation for

the many ways dogs work with us, guide us and shower us with unconditional affection, as well as understand which dog-related work might suit you best.

## **PANT: TRAINED THERAPY DOGS IN ACTION**

The cast features trained therapy dogs who demonstrate one of the important roles dogs play in helping people: bringing the love! “They visit clients at MVLE; they go to schools, hospitals, and assisted living facilities,” says Greenlee. “Interacting with a trained therapy dog helps people relax and feel connected. Nikita, for example, is trained to sit on people’s laps, while Nic is trained to help with occupational therapy. People can practice small motor control in their hands by putting bows and clips on his fur. He’s a patient guy and never gets tired of the attention. The grand finale is a dance featuring these dog-therapy teams,” says Greenlee.

*All About Dogs* runs 45 minutes. It is suitable for people of all ages and those with and without intellectual and physical disability. All performances are FREE, but reservations are recommended. Please contact Sarah Caldwell at (703) 894-8247 or [scaldwell@mvle.org](mailto:scaldwell@mvle.org) to reserve your seats.

Since 2015, Greenlee and the BodyWise Dance artistic team have led MVLE Moves!, a movement therapy program for individuals with disabilities at MVLE. *All About Dogs* is the latest chapter in the groups’ work together supporting the physical and emotional health of people with disabilities.

Operating since 1971, Virginia-based MVLE, Inc. provides employment training and job placement, contributing to enhanced quality of life for people with intellectual and physical disability. MVLE is an internationally accredited agency that partners with more than 125 commercial businesses in addition to government and other not-for-profit agencies. MVLE supports over 450 individuals with disabilities each year, with a commitment to creating futures, one person at a time.

*All About Dogs* is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, Virginia Commission for the Arts, the Arts Council of Fairfax County, Wells Fargo Foundation, Rea Charitable Trust, and Express Lanes Foundation. Follow BodyWise Dance and MVLE, Inc. on Facebook and Twitter.

### **Upcoming performances of All About Dogs:**

**Tuesday, May 8, 11:00am**

Sherwood Community Center  
3740 Old Lee Hwy, Fairfax VA 22030

**Saturday, May 19, 4:00pm**

Hylton Performing Arts Center  
10960 George Mason Circle, Manassas, VA 20109

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