

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Morgan Rothenbaum
Senior Director of Marketing and Communications
morgan.rothenbaum@fairyland.org
(510) 946-0282



Children's Fairyland Announces New Puppet Education Program for Young Children in Oakland with Support from the PNC Foundation

Building on a 68-year-long history in puppetry and commitment to inclusive learning opportunities, Children's Fairyland begins developing a dynamic puppet education program for young children ages two to five in Oakland with generous support from the PNC Foundation.

Oakland, CA (April 1, 2024) – Children's Fairyland, Oakland's iconic storybook theme park and pioneer in puppetry, announces a new partnership with the PNC Foundation to bring puppet education into early childhood learning spaces in the Bay Area. With PNC's generous support, Fairyland is developing an interactive in-park puppet program that invites children to participate, engage and play with puppet characters while immersing themselves in stories. This program lays the groundwork for implementing a puppet education program in Oakland schools and early learning centers serving children ages two to five. This partnership represents a visionary step outlined in Children's Fairyland's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan to extend the magic of puppetry and its educational benefits beyond the park's borders and into the heart of Oakland's communities.

"The new Puppet Education Program represents a significant milestone in Children's Fairyland's commitment to fostering early childhood development," said Kymberly Miller, the executive director of Children's Fairyland. "Fairyland's rich history of puppetry, dating back to 1956, has been a source of joy and learning for generations. This partnership with PNC reflects our dedication to expanding educational opportunities and affirms our belief in the magic of storytelling to inspire a lifelong love for learning. It's a testament to our unwavering dedication to increasing access and opportunity for all families."

The initial trial of the program began in April 2023 with hands-on puppet workshops in the park, including "Grown-Up and Me" for toddlers and "Puppeteer Boot Camp" for preschool and elementary students. Bolstered by positive feedback and PNC's support, Fairyland secured the necessary resources and community partnerships to continue evolving the program. Following months of testing, in February 2024, Fairyland met with focus groups of early childhood through grade school educators to better understand classroom culture and dynamics, teachers' specific needs and how puppet education can support classroom curriculum and visits to the park. As Fairyland advances planning and curriculum development, the initiative not only emphasizes puppetry as a valuable tool for teaching but also seeds aspirations of establishing an education center with a dedicated puppet learning space for children to engage in puppet activities.

Children's Fairyland is honored by PNC's commitment and looks forward to a transformative partnership in bringing the magic of puppetry to Oakland's young learners. "For nearly 20 years, PNC has proudly supported early childhood education through our signature [Grow Up Great®](#) initiative," said Megan Schoettmer, PNC regional president for Northern California. "Supporting Fairyland's pilot of this puppet-based curriculum for children aged two to five is a natural fit for us. We know that programs such as this one help to prepare early learners for future success in the classroom and in life."

Over the next year, Fairyland is collaborating with early childhood educators and community partners to develop a thoughtfully crafted curriculum that complements their critical educational work. Beginning in the spring/summer, Fairyland will introduce a new dimension to puppetry experiences in the park. Following puppet show performances, Fairyland's puppet education specialist will invite children to engage and play with puppet characters while immersed in the story of the season. Additionally, Fairyland is enhancing its summer field trip program by collaborating with long-time partners from [Lotus Bloom](#) and various Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) Child Development Centers to pilot interactive experiences that combine community-building activities with the interactive puppet show experience.

Early childhood educators who support Oakland children can get involved with the program by signing up for a puppet workshop field trip once registration opens in July 2024 on the website.

Learn more about the history of Fairyland's Storybook Puppet Theater on [Fairyland's website](#). Stay connected on Fairyland's social media, [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#), for updates from the park.

ABOUT CHILDREN'S FAIRYLAND: For over 70 years, Children's Fairyland has stimulated the imaginations of children ages 0-8, making it America's first storybook theme park. Founded in 1950, Fairyland features puppet shows, live performances, educational entertainment, and interactive activities set amidst whimsical storybook sets. At the heart of Fairyland's history is the Storybook Puppet Theater, constructed in 1956 and celebrated as the oldest continuously operating puppet theater in the United States. This iconic theater has been a pivotal part of countless childhoods, introducing young audiences to the wonders of live performances while fostering crucial skills in language development, story comprehension, empathy, and humor. Learn more at www.fairyland.org or visit the park at 699 Bellevue Ave, Oakland, CA 94610.

ABOUT PNC FOUNDATION: The PNC Foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group (www.pnc.com), actively supports organizations that provide services for the benefit of communities in which it has a significant presence. The foundation focuses its philanthropic mission on early childhood education and community and economic development, which includes the arts and culture and promotion of racial and social justice. Through PNC Grow Up Great®, its signature cause that began in 2004, PNC has created a bilingual \$500 million, multi-year initiative to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life.

##