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Cape Fear Regional Theatre Receives \$6,000 Grant from Piedmont Natural Gas Foundation to Support CFRTour, *Bunnicula: The Musical*

FAYETTEVILLE, NC – Cape Fear Regional Theatre (CFRT) has been awarded a \$6,000 grant from the Piedmont Natural Gas Foundation to support the 2026 CFRTour production of *Bunnicula*, a musical adaptation of the beloved children’s book. The grant will help fund a four-week spring tour bringing live theatre directly into elementary schools across Cumberland, Harnett, Hoke, Robeson, and Sampson counties.

Designed to promote childhood literacy and increase equitable access to the arts, CFRTour will impact approximately 12,000 students and teachers this March. The program focuses on reaching underserved and Title I schools, removing barriers that often prevent students from experiencing live theatre.

“The CFRTour is one of the most direct ways we fulfill our mission of being a stage for all,” said CFRT Education Director Marc de la Concha. “There is nothing like bringing the joy of professional theatre directly to students. The Tour breaks down barriers to access, alleviates the burdens on teachers, and meets students where they are. We’re inspired every day by the students and teachers we meet, by their enthusiasm for these performances, and we are deeply grateful to the Piedmont Natural Gas Foundation for investing in arts access for students across our region.”

The 2026 tour production, *Bunnicula*, follows Chester the Cat and Harold the Dog as they investigate the mystery of their family’s suddenly juice-less vegetables — and the suspicious new bunny who may (or may not) be a vampire. The original *Bunnicula* novel has sold more than 8 million copies and was named one of the National Education Association’s “Teachers’ Top 100 Books for Children.”

Directed by CFRT’s Education Director, Marc de la Concha, the tour features a company of professional actors and a fully portable set and sound system, allowing the show to be performed in school gyms, cafeterias, and multipurpose rooms. Each participating school receives copies of the book, and a curriculum-based study guide aligned with North Carolina standards to extend learning beyond the performance.

Research shows that arts engagement plays a significant role in academic success. Students who participate in or attend live theatre demonstrate improved verbal skills and increased classroom engagement. CFRTour also alleviates the logistical and financial burden of field trips by bringing the experience directly to campus, a crucial benefit for schools navigating staffing shortages and limited resources.

“CFRT is an invaluable resource that exposes children who would otherwise not have the opportunity to experience live theater,” shared one local teacher. “The production was enjoyable and provided not only a literacy connection but also a positive message.”

The CFRTour program is supported by a combination of foundation grants, individual donors, and community partners committed to expanding arts access across southeastern North Carolina. For more information about CFRTour or Cape Fear Regional Theatre’s education programs, visit www.cfirt.org.

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About Cape Fear Regional Theatre

Cape Fear Regional Theatre is a stage for all. We bring world-class art to our community. Inspiration lives here. Founded in 1962, CFRT is one of the leading theatres in the Southeast, producing a six-show mainstage season and robust education and outreach programs that serve thousands of students and families each year.