



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Award Winning Gang Prevention Program The Unusual Suspects
presents the Original Youth Musical *Life on the Offbeat***

Written and Performed by Harbor-Gateway Youth

Two Performances Only!

August 14th at Narbonne High School

August 16th at the Odyssey Theatre in West L.A.

July 22, 2009, Los Angeles, CA- The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company (**US**) joins forces with the Odyssey Theatre in West L.A. to present the original youth musical, *Life on the Offbeat*. The music, lyrics, and book were created entirely by Narbonne High School Students and will be performed by Harbor City/Harbor Gateway youth. This limited engagement will be performed on Friday, August 14, 2009 at 7:00pm in the Narbonne High School Auditorium, Harbor City and Sunday, August 16, 2009 at 2:00pm at the Odyssey Theatre in West Los Angeles.

Narbonne High School sits on the border of Harbor City and the Harbor Gateway which has been identified by the city and county as an area in **high need of gang prevention and intervention**. Within the span of two months, **two Narbonne students were shot and killed due to gang related violence** this past spring. Youth in this area face additional risk factors such as a high school **drop-out rate of over 50%**, racial tension, and a lack of economic opportunities. **US** provides theater arts and violence prevention services for underserved youth that are either on probation, in foster care, incarcerated or at high-risk for joining gangs at sites throughout Los Angeles County in addition to Narbonne High School.

Volunteer professional mentors are an integral part of The Unusual Suspects' programs. **Michael Shapiro**, acclaimed drummer, percussionist, and producer, was an important advisor guiding the students and staff through **US's** first musical. Mr. Shapiro has worked with such noted artists as will.i.am from the Black Eyed Peas, Justin Timberlake, Macy Gray, Sergio Mendes and the legendary Herb Alpert. Actress and dancer, Maya Parish, helped choreograph the show while playwright, Cort Brinkerhoff, advised on the script. Emmy Award Nominee Actor and Director, **Adam Arkin**, also volunteered his time with the Narbonne students to help archive the rehearsal process.

The creation of *Life on the Off-beat* began in the fall of 2008 at Narbonne High School during The Unusual Suspects after-school playwriting program. Over the course of ten weeks, participants learned to work as an ensemble to create an original play and in the process wrote **US's** very first musical. With the guidance of **US** teaching artists and volunteer mentors Narbonne students continued to develop *Life on the Offbeat* by composing and revising the music and lyrics of the show during **US's** After-school Musical Theatre Song Writing Workshop this past spring. After almost a year of work and an intensive summer rehearsal process, *Life on the Offbeat* will receive its first full production.

Life on the Offbeat follows the story of two very different twin brothers, Aaron and Baron. When Prom night approaches and they find themselves vying for the same girl, complications arise. Candice and her friend Jade soon discover that high school dating isn't all it's cracked up to be. As each character struggles with their own dreams and insecurities, they discover that – in the end – friendship is what's most important.

A performance will first take place in Harbor City on Friday, August 14th at 7:00pm in the Narbonne High School Auditorium, 24300 Western Ave, Harbor City, CA 90710 followed by a performance on Sunday, August 16th at 2:00pm at the Odyssey Theatre, 2055 South Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90025. Admission is by suggested donation. Reservations can be made by calling 213-488-8488, x201 or via email at rsvp@theunusualsuspects.org.

The Odyssey Theatre Ensemble has a forty year tradition of exploring, producing and presenting works on the forefront of contemporary theatre art. With the generous support of The Marclad Foundation, a private family foundation based in San Francisco, California, the Odyssey is able to provide space and a professional stage experience to underserved youth. The foundation was established in 2004 with the goal of impacting and improving the community. The Odyssey Theatre's relationship with The Marclad Foundation is part of The ODDS program, Odyssey's student outreach program. *Life on the Off-beat* participants will perform in a 99 seat theater, learn the behind the scenes elements of a professional house, and be exposed to the performing arts community in Los Angeles.

The Unusual Suspects is committed to educating the public on the plight of underserved children and youth in foster care and the juvenile justice system in Los Angeles County. We fill a gap in arts education, providing a much-needed service to youth who would otherwise not have access to the arts. The Unusual Suspects program at Narbonne High School is made possible by the support of the Boys and Girls Club of the South Bay, Beyond the Bell, and Weed & Seed. **US** was recognized at The White House in January 2008 by the President's Committee on the Arts & the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts with the *Coming Up Taller Award*, the nation's highest honor for after-school programming.

For more information visit the **US** website at www.TheUnusualSuspects.org.