

## **2016 OUTSTANDING ARTS EDUCATORS**

### **Paula Davidoff and Carolyn Hunt**

Paula Davidoff is a storyteller who has who has been a teaching artist since 1997. Through her affiliation with arts-in-education organizations such as New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Morris Arts, and Storytelling Arts, she has taught students of all ages to tell stories with their voice and body, as well as with their pen. Early in her career, Paula recognized that the art of storytelling reaches students who have been unsuccessful in traditional classrooms. Since then, she has worked extensively in alternative educational settings, designing and implementing arts-based literacy programs for middle- and high school students in juvenile detention centers, residential shelters, and alternative high schools. For the past three years, Paula, with storyteller Julie Della Torre, has been collaborating with teachers in the Paterson School District to design programs that embed storytelling activities in English Language, Science, and Social Studies curricula. Paula is co-founder/director, with playwright Carolyn Hunt, of *Girls Surviving*, a troupe of young women from the Morris School District who write and perform plays based on their experiences to stimulate dialogue within the community about issues important to teens.

She studied storytelling with Susan Danoff, Laura Simms, and Diane Wolkstein and holds a BA from St. John's College (Annapolis, MD) and an MA in literacy education from the Rutgers Graduate School of Education. A mother of five, Paula writes, "...language not only helps us describe and understand life, it has the power to change life."

**Carolyn Hunt** began as an actress, studying at an international theatre school in Nancy, France. Today she is a teaching artist, writer, director, and playwright, helping people of all ages and backgrounds give voice to their stories through writing and performance.

A teaching artist for the New Jersey Writers Project, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and Playwrights Theatre of New Jersey, she is co-director of *Girls Surviving*, the program she created with Paula Davidoff in 2005. She is also writing a book on that program with Paula entitled *Girls Surviving: Freeing Teen Voices Through Writing and Performance*. An article based on the book, "Raising Voices: Teaching Teen Girls to Speak Out," was published in the September, 2015 issue of the *Teaching Artist Journal*.

Carolyn teaches playwriting, leads professional development workshops, mentors both prose writers and playwrights, develops curricula and directs. She uses traditional

dramatic form, literature and playback theatre in her work. In Playback Theatre performances, actors engage in a series of patterned responses to recreate personal stories on stage. Carolyn has adapted these techniques for a variety of groups and organizations that want to explore individual and social issues through personal story or delve deeper into the role that stories play in their lives and work. Carolyn also led workshops for professional storytellers using exercises tailored to providing greater insight into the stories they tell. Affiliated with Writers Theatre of New Jersey since its inception in 1986, Carolyn has helped create and implement playwriting curricula now used in classrooms and professional development workshops throughout the state. She was founder and, for seven years, artistic director of Common Thread Playback Theater, Inc. As a result of her many years of experience working with students, teachers, juvenile offenders, senior citizens, adults with disabilities, community and arts organizations, she was awarded the New Jersey Governor's Award in Arts Education in 2007.

A member of the Dramatists Guild, Carolyn has authored plays touching on welfare reform, politics, gender and religion. She trained at Vassar College's International School of Playback Theater (with Playback founder Jonathan Fox); with Stella Adler; at ACT; the Centre Universitaire International de

Formation et Recherche Dramatiques (Nancy, France); and holds a BA *cum laude* and Master of Letters from Drew University.

Therefore, in recognition of their passionate commitment to developing storytelling and playwriting skills as a means of changing lives, for their dedication in teaching vulnerable populations, as well as for the many positive impacts they have had on generations of students, Morris Arts is delighted to award the 2016 OUTSTANDING ARTS EDUCATORS award to Paula Davidoff and Carolyn Hunt.

Will they please come up to receive the award.

March 30, 2016