

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

# New Interactive Film Tackles Taboo Youth Issues In A Fresh & Innovative Way

*Far From The Heart Premieres in Toronto September 1st, 2011*

**Toronto, ON, August 2011** – A groundbreaking online interactive film gives teens a safe and simulated setting to virtually live out the issues they face today: sexual assault, dating violence, alcohol abuse, and self-image.

“It’s a powerful production with lots of grit and humour. Perfect for Canadian teens right now in this day in age,” says Joan Chandler, Artistic Director of Sheatre, a cutting-edge film and theatre organization. “We want this film to inspire teens to not only make the right choices, but discuss what those choices may be.”

*Far From the Heart* is a unique concept that explores taboo social issues and promotes a practiced and positive response to teen pressures. The innovative film calls teens to action, motivating them to submit their own alternative ending via iPhone, blackberry or other digital filming devices and then upload it to YouTube.

“The digitized methodology of online forum-style film allows youth to make their own choices and explore difficult issues in a safe environment,” says Chandler. “For some kids, this is the first time these important issues have been brought up.”

The project has received critical acclaim and support from the family of the late world-renowned Canadian-born talent, **Phil Hartman** of *Saturday Night Live* (Bill Clinton) and *The Simpsons* (Troy McClure). “The statistics are horrifying. There is a skewed psyche out there of what is appropriate,” says **Paul Hartman**, brother of Phil Hartman, and major supporter of **Far From The Heart**.

Through the power of interactive online film, **Far From the Heart** encourages a higher-level of thinking in young people when faced with common social situations including underage drinking, sexual abuse and domestic violence.

“The blurring of moral lines is a growing trend in society,” says film producer, Stephen Gardner, of Gardner Productions, “in the film, we confront some really tough subject matter and ask teens to reestablish the boundaries of what is acceptable behavior, what is not, and how to avoid these situations completely.”

“Sheatre is a great organization which works to promote social change and fix what is socially wrong. We need to stand up and speak out about these issues, bringing them out of the closet and onto people’s lips,” says Hartman.

**Far From the Heart** will launch at 6:00PM, September 1<sup>st</sup> at Toronto’s Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre, 750 Spadina Ave, Toronto. For more information and to see the film trailer, go to [www.farfromtheheart.com](http://www.farfromtheheart.com)

**About Sheatre:** Founded by Joan Chandler in 1985, **Sheatre** is quickly becoming a national presence in community arts. The theatre group is currently traveling through Ontario and Saskatchewan to share the groundbreaking theatre Forum, *Far From the Heart*, with young people in various community groups. Through this interactive form of education, they aim to turn peer pressure into positive action by exposing and encouraging discussion on common youth issues. This revolutionary interactive film will be featured on the highly anticipated *Far From the Heart* website, to be launched in August. For more information, link to [www.sheatre.com](http://www.sheatre.com)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=79751577537> | Twitter: @FarFromTheHeart

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**Media Contacts:**

Katherine Dempster, 416 928 1978, [katherine@lotusleaf.ca](mailto:katherine@lotusleaf.ca)  
Julia Che, 416 928 1978, [julia.che@lotusleaf.ca](mailto:julia.che@lotusleaf.ca)

**THE HARD FACTS:**

- The results of a 2011 study showed that 61% of male participants did not consider forcing sex on an acquaintance as rape (Weiler-Polak, 2011)
- In 2007, over half of all sexual assault victims were under the age of 18 (Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre, 2010)
- Children and youth accounted for 61% of sexual assault cases reported to police in 2002 (Statistics Canada, 2004)
- 51% of Canadian Women have experienced at least one incident of violence since the age of 16 (Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Sexual Assault Fact Sheet. Ottawa: C.A.C.S.W., 1985)
- Sixty-three percent of all sexual assaults reported to the police involve girls under the age of 18. (Russell 1996)
- Fifty-four percent of girls under the age of 16 have experienced some form of unwanted sexual attention. Twenty-four percent have experienced rape or coercive sex, and 17% have experienced incest. (Holmes and Silverman 1992; Russell 1996)
- Four out of five female undergraduates reported that they had been victims of violence in a dating relationship. Twenty-nine percent of that number reported incidents of sexual assault. (OWD 1995, 1)
- Girls are two to three times more likely to experience sexual abuse than boys. (Johnston and Saenz 1997)
- Sixty percent of Canadian college-aged males report that they would commit sexual assault if they were certain that they would not be caught. (OWD 1995, 2)
- Thirty-one percent of sexual assaults occur in dating and acquaintance relationships. (OWD 1995, 2)
- Twenty percent of Toronto secondary school students reported that they had experienced at least one form of assault in a dating relationship. (OWD 1995, 5)
- In a Canadian study, 25% of all female post-secondary students in 1993 had been physically and/or sexually assaulted by a male date or boyfriend. (Johnson 1996, 115)
- In a Canadian study, 1 in 5 male students surveyed said that forced intercourse was all right "if he spends money on her", "if he is stoned or drunk", or "if they had been dating for a long time." (Johnson 1996,120)
- In 51% of all incidents of dating violence reported by Canadian women, the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol. (Johnson 1996, 128)