

NEWS RELEASE

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BELINDA STARLING FUND AWARDS FIRST GRANT

The London Bus Theatre Company based in Hockley, is the first charity to receive a grant from the Belinda Starling Memorial Fund, which is managed by local grantmaking charitable trust, Essex Community Foundation.

The group received £750 towards the development of a drama project with young offenders, training them in the art of acting with the aim of assisting them to apply to drama college or to increase their skills to get a job.

"We are so delighted to receive this grant", said Katherine Austen, Chair of London Bus. "We have a proven track record of using drama to work with young people addressing issues, such as bullying, drugs, alcohol and crime and this project will reach hundreds of young people through workshops and roadshows".

Belinda Starling Trim died, aged 34, in August 2006 and her family have now set up the Fund in her memory.

The Fund awards grants to help young people in Essex, whose literary, drama or music ambitions and talents cannot take root without the opportunity for help and encouragement. These were Belinda's own talents and she died knowing that her first novel, the Journal of Dora Damage would be published. Sadly she did not live to read the fabulous reviews.

"Belinda would have loved The London Bus Theatre", said her father, David. "They are so passionate about their work and determined to develop young people's potential to give them another chance in life".

The Fund is managed by, Essex Community Foundation which manages funds on behalf of individuals, companies and public agencies. Since it was established in 1996, the Foundation has distributed around 3000 grants totalling £11 million to charities in Essex.

For more information about the Belinda Starling Memorial Fund, to make a donation or for information about the Foundation's grant programmes visit www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk or call Jo Murphy on 01245 355947.

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Notes to Editors:

Photo Caption: David and Judy Starling present Chris Turner and Ross Evins from London Bus Theatre Company with a cheque for £750 from the Belinda Starling Memorial Fund.

Essex Community Foundation was set up in 1996 and has established a grants programme which has seen more than 2500 Essex based charities and community groups receive over £11 million in grants. Funds are distributed on behalf of a wide range of donors who want their charitable giving to be accessible to local charities. www.essexcommunityfoundation.org.uk