

7 Stages Theatre

Atlanta, GA

Reading selection: *Brother, I'm Dying*

Selection explanation:

7 Stages is committed to serving its patrons with quality, dialogue-provoking productions and outreach programs that inspire positive social change. With Georgia ranking 50th in state arts funding, we believe that we must also serve as a curriculum resource to area schools to help integrate arts learning into the school setting and to provide meaningful opportunities for students to engage in creative action. As such, 7 Stages is excited to include an extensive reading program coupled with arts residencies, and the production and presentation of artistic responses by both students and professionals alike – all inspired by 'Brother, I'm Dying'.

We are drawn to the novel's focus on stories of displaced or immigrant families - families separated and fighting to be together. We will ask students and adults in our program, many of them refugees or the children of refugees themselves, to share personal stories of journeys, yearnings, and separations, leading into artistic responses to the novel, using literature as a springboard for creative thinking, empathy, and positive change.

Programming and audience details:

Proposed programming beginning date: 09-03-2016

Proposed programming ending date: 05-21-2017

Number of partner organizations: 11

Number of book discussions: 10

Number of events: 11

Anticipated total participants: 12,500

Financial information:

Grant request: \$20,000.00

Current fiscal year expenses: \$498,118.00

Previous fiscal year expenses: \$539,141.00

Description of geographic area where programming will take place:

7 Stages, located in Atlanta, Georgia, engages a diverse audience of 20,000+ annually. The core audience includes individuals who are interested in social, political, and spiritual change through education and discussion. The demographic averages include 53% Caucasian, 28% African-American, 14% Latino, 4% Asian, and 2% multiracial. Audiences' age range represents a wide cross-section of the community with 11% under 24, 33% between the ages of 24 and 44, 46% between 44 and 64, and 9% over 65 years old. Recently, there has been a marked increase in African American and youth presence. Regardless of demographic, the audience generally shares a common belief in the power of the performing arts as a means for social change.

Specifically, 7 Stages seeks to reach citizens from Fulton and Dekalb counties. These counties represent some of the highest levels of economic, racial, and cultural diversity in the region. Programming touches 12,500 adult and teen literature lovers through the Decatur Book Festival, library events, residencies, and additional programming.

Project Description

Describe your programming plans in detail. Include the types of activities, target audiences for those activities, locations, timeframes, and number.

Government oppression, the immigrant experience, and hope are themes in the memoir/biography of 'Brother, I'm Dying', all of which align to what 7 Stages seeks to accomplish through its artistic work: to inspire social change. The day-to-day violence experienced by Danticat's family members and her deep love and family relationships are ideal frameworks to explore the plight of refugees, the effects of immigration policy, and the compassion of community. Artistic responses will be thoughtful, personal, and visceral - like the memoir itself.

In collaboration with the Decatur Library, Georgia Center for the Book, The Decatur Book Festival, metro Atlanta schools, and other community partners, 7 Stages will organize and promote a series of literary outreach events and programs in response to Edwidge Danticat's novel, 'Brother, I'm Dying'. Our programming seeks to encourage a love for education, reading, and artistic expression through lectures, artist panels, workshops, classroom residencies, community dialogues, performances, and creative response events. Programming will be implemented and overseen by 7 Stages, an Atlanta theatre that produces work with high artistic standards, and will directly touch 12,500 people from across metro Atlanta.

Timeline and Event Summary

Kickoff Event

Decatur Book Festival (Sept 3-5, 2016): The Decatur Book Festival (DBF) is the largest independent book festival in the country. More than 1,000 world-class authors and hundreds of thousands of festival-goers visit Decatur Square to enjoy author readings, panel discussions, and more. As part of the kick-off event at DBF, 7 Stages will present staged readings of 'Brother, I'm Dying', hold a panel discussion on creativity and immigration, form reading/response groups, and distribute free books.

11 special events including 3 library events (includes 1 keynote session) and 8 performances (Sept '16-June '17)
Library: 7 Stages' programming includes three events hosted by The Decatur Library from October 2016 through March 2017 that includes a book club – led by Education Director Dorothy Bell, who guided our Big Read book clubs in 2014 and 2015 to great success; an artistic response event that allows local artists and community members to create multi-media responses to the book with the assistance of 7 Stages' artistic staff; and a keynote lecture by an immigration studies scholar from Kennesaw State University, held in conjunction with Ga. Center for the Book.

Performances: 7 Stages will arrange a poetry slam at a local coffee house renowned for its weekly poetry events. Here local poets and performers will share original work inspired by Danticat's novel and themes. In Spring '17, five public in school presentations will occur. In May, 7 Stages will present 'Home Brew: 'Brother, I'm Dying', an artistic/theatrical response to the novel developed by students, storytellers, musicians, dancers, and designers. In June, Youth Creates participants- a playwriting and theatre skills program for economically, culturally, and racially diverse teens- will come together to read and dissect the novel before writing, creating, and performing a new theatrical production inspired by it.

10 Literary Discussions (Oct '16–May '17)

Engagement with school and educational partners will be held during this time with a minimum of ten sessions to at least 1,000 students at Horizon School, Renfroe Middle School, Benjamin Franklin Academy, and Sequoya High School, amongst others. Schools will host workshops, intensive residencies that dissect the novel, and public performances inspired by the novel. School-wide theatre projects end with a presentation that represents the voices of the students, encouraging the students' realization that there is power in knowledge gained through critical reading and creative comprehension. Classes choose a theme from 'Brother, I'm Dying' to explore, such as immigration or identity. Next, students use online and mobile technology to gather the opinions of their peers. When the unique voice of the school community is captured, students are divided into teams of researchers, writers, designers, and performers. 7 Stages Teaching Artists guide students through the process of theatre making and expanded literary appreciation.

Partnerships Description

(a) Describe your partnerships with libraries (as applicable) and community organizations. (b) Explain the role each partner will play in your program, the activities each partner will undertake with your organization, and whether these partnerships are confirmed or pending. (c) Explain how your partnerships will allow you to reach your intended audience(s) and strengthen or build new communities around the NEA Big Read activities.

Collaboration is at the heart of 7 Stages and is reflected throughout the 2016-17 Big Read. The Decatur Library, Georgia Center for the Book, and Decatur Book Festival are confirmed The Big Read partners and are excited to collaborate with 7 Stages. All partners have offered their space to hold events and help promote The Big Read to the community. Specifically, The Decatur Library will host three events that include a Book Club discussion, artistic response event, and a keynote presentation by a Kennesaw State University immigration scholar, presented in conjunction with the Georgia Center for the Book. These events are central to the partner's interest in reaching a diverse base of Atlanta and Decatur area residents with programming.

The Decatur Book Festival, the largest independent book festival in the nation, is confirmed to kick off The Big Read at its September event. During this time, performers will conduct live readings from the novel, reading groups will be formed, an artistic response contest will launch, and program discussions will occur. The event will draw families and literature lovers into the programming.

7 Stages has a long history of collaborating with metro Atlanta schools for curriculum based residency programs. Five long-standing educational partners have already confirmed participation in The Big Read and two others are pending. Serving approximately 1,000 students with The Big Read programming, classroom residencies include reading 'Brother I'm Dying', engaging in group dialogues with 7 Stages artistic staff about the book's themes, and creating creative responses as a team. Teaching artists will guide select student groups in creating original visual and performance responses inspired by the literature. Further, topics such as, "What pieces of literature changed your perspective?" and "Has Literature inspired you to create?" will be used to springboard writing extensions and performance responses.

Atlanta is a highly diverse city and 7 Stages strives for its patrons to reflect that diversity. By rotating the programming between the venues listed above, 7 Stages ensures that various sections of the community are served. All of the programming is designed to unite participants from various backgrounds; encourage critical and creative thought processes; explore themes and ideas relevant to the novel, and life in general; and challenge participants to develop and explore multiple perspectives. People must create mutual understandings that help to us make sense of this world. The Big Read has the ability to bring together people to share experiences within the context of residencies, workshops, panels, reading groups, and community dialogues around 'Brother, I'm Dying'. The live performances of Home Brew, the Youth Creates original work, and the poetry slam event furthers the conversation.

CONFIRMED PARTNERS

Joe Davich - Director of the Georgia Center for the Book. Assist in coordinating events at GA Center for the Book facilities. Promotion of all events.

Gina Jenkins - Decatur Library Coordinator. Assist in coordinating events at Decatur Library. Promotion of all events.

Alison Weissinger - Director of DeKalb County Public Library. Assist in coordinating events at Decatur Library.

Julie Wilson - Decatur Book Festival Program Director. Assist in appearance, events, and performances at the Decatur Book Festival. Promotion of all events.

Sarah Looks - Charis Books - Provide discounted books, lead circle group readings, and publicize The Big Read to store patrons.

Sally Gustin - Horizons School – School Administrator and Teacher. Assist in organizing school group activities including an intensive residency resulting in a public performance and gallery exhibit.

Sarah Talton - Renfroe Middle School - Assistant Principle. Assist in organizing school group activities including an intensive residency resulting in a public performance and gallery exhibit.

Catherine McKinney - Sequoyah High - Teacher. Assist in organizing school activities including an intensive residency resulting in a public exhibit.

Ivy Prep. Young Men's Leadership Acad. and Benjamin Franklin Acad. Assist in organizing school activities, including residency and public presentation.

Promotional Description

(a) Describe how you will promote your Big Read programming. Discuss any proposed or existing partnerships with specific media outlets. (b) Explain how your program will utilize the digital guides found on neabigread.org, and copies of your reading selection.

Since 7 Stages draws a diverse cross-section of the population, The Big Read marketing plan must be varied to reach a range of Atlanta inhabitants. The Big Read will be promoted through the 7 Stages website, season brochure, social media, e-marketing, and an assortment of advertising that targets specific demographics, newcomers, and communities. Press releases will be sent to local & regional outlets, community leaders, and other theatres. Targeted efforts will take place throughout the 7 Stages season and will include utilizing ArtsATL as a media partner. The sponsor will help promote the program through their website, social media outlets, and email blasts. MailChimp is a current partner in supporting productions through grant funding, and is very helpful in encouraging their employees and clients to engage with our work. 7 Stages has established partnerships with the Atlanta Dream, Atlanta Planit, and Lost-N-Found Youth Inc. (an LGBT youth organization) who can also promote The Big Read programming.

During the Kickoff Event, a creative response contest will be announced, requesting written and illustrated responses to the novel. Participants will be given a deadline, have access to materials provided by support from The Big Read program (the book, art supplies, etc). Winners will be announced and recognized publicly at the opening of Home Brew: 'Brother, I'm Dying'. Prizes will include tickets to 7 Stages' productions; their work displayed at 7 Stages theatre and on the 7 Stages website; and if the winner is a middle or high school student, they will receive a partial scholarship to the Youth Creates program, which some participants will create and perform a new theatrical work inspired by the novel.

Other plans include The Big Read centered promotions with partner schools and universities, tie-ins with media, and special events. 7 Stages hosts VIP opening night receptions to stimulate word of mouth discussion and offers discount tickets for students, community groups, corporate sponsors, and 6,000 City of Atlanta employees. An online campaign focuses on web portals for print media partners and social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

The digital educational materials will be an essential component of the literary outreach activities and will be utilized and distributed as follows.

Reader's Guides, Teacher's Guides, and Audio Guides – These materials will help guide the discussions, workshops, and classroom sessions taught in the partner schools, library, and throughout the community as appropriate. Teachers, students, and attendees will be informed on how to access the materials. In addition, a link to these resources will be published in the program for Home Brew, 'Brother, I'm Dying'. The programs are distributed free of charge to audience members. 7 Stages will also include a link to the guides on its website and include them in email blasts and on social media sites when marketing The Big Read. Spanish translations of Reader's Guides – Atlanta has a large Hispanic/Latino population and will include information about the translated guides, if available, to patrons and school partners.

Logos, caricature art, and posters - The logo will be utilized prominently in the production's program and on marketing materials. Caricature art and posters can be distributed through email blasts and on social media sites. 7 Stages currently has 4,500 social media followers and email blasts reach 9,000 patrons.

Official Big Read Banners – These banners will be proudly displayed at 7 Stages, the Decatur Library, Georgia Center for the Book, and the Decatur Book Festival, as well as partner schools.

Official Big Read Bookmarks – Bookmarks will be distributed to Big Read participants including students, 7 Stages patrons, the Decatur Library, and at the Kickoff Event.

Organization Description

Describe your organization's history, programming, and achievements.

Founded in 1979, 7 Stages is a professional, nonprofit theatre company devoted to engaging artists and audiences by focusing on the social, political, and spiritual values of contemporary culture. 7 Stages gives primary emphasis to international work and the support and development of new plays, new playwrights, and new methods of collaboration. For over 37 years, 7 Stages has been a global center for the creation of vital conversations through collaborative performance.

Through its mission 7 Stages challenges artists and audiences to confront topics not openly discussed – like race relations, human rights, war, and immigration – in a manner that redefines the way people are involved in the creative process. This practice fuels a cultural laboratory that empowers artists and community to collectively ask questions, generate awareness for social change, and create public value through various platforms: performances, workshops, keynote dialogues, and residencies.

With an emphasis on the development of new works, playwrights, and methods of collaboration, 7 Stages touches nearly 20,000 patrons annually that reflect Atlanta's rich diversity. It has produced more than 80 world premieres, over 25 American premieres, and numerous regional premieres. 7 Stages believes that the development of international relationships is essential to understanding each culture that theatre touches. For over 20 years 7 Stages has participated in international exchanges to trade ideas, best practices, techniques, and inspiration.

Annually, productions at 7 Stages top the "Best Plays" list in every major city publication. The Drama League of New York recognized 7 Stages as one of 50 theaters nationwide for its Theatre Excellence in America Program. Recently, the Atlanta Journal Constitution called 7 Stages, "An innovative, risk-taking theatre" and director Kenny Leon said, "Their productions have reminded us that the world is a better place when everyone's story is told. They represent the soul of the Atlanta arts scene."

Describe your organization's experience with presenting community-wide programming that demonstrates an ability to conduct a successful NEA Big Read.

Creating artistic responses to existing literature, and using that literature to springboard outreach events and inspire theatrical productions are not new activities to 7 Stages. Most recently, 7 Stages participated in the 2014-15 and 2015-16 Big Read. These programs combined reach was over 30,000 participants from across metro Atlanta including four schools in Fulton, Dekalb, and Cobb counties. In addition to distributing free copies of 'The Heart is A Lonely Hunter' and 'Fahrenheit 451', 7 Stages produced 'fml: how Carson McCullers saved my life', whose main character is inspired after reading McCullers's novel, and is currently developing a theatrical adaptation of 'Fahrenheit 451'. Schools and community book clubs were engaged in conversations about literature and the creative act as a tool to turn fear into empathy. Local students participated in residencies with opportunities to create and perform/display their own artistic response to the book and production. Seven local professional artists created interactive performances based on all Big Read books for 2015's 'Curious Encounters Festival', which over 300 patrons enjoyed. The most dynamic and interesting outcome has been these vibrant and extensive artistic responses to the novels. The responses have prompted 7 Stages to redouble its focus on creative engagement with the 2016-17 Big Read of 'Brother, I'm Dying'.

In addition to its work through The Big Read, 7 Stages recently adapted Eoin McNamee's 'The Navigator' ('13) and Stephen Crane's 'Red Badge of Courage' ('14) to the stage. In both instances, the productions contained extensive education components and outreach programs including talk-backs, question and answer sessions, group responses to the book, Skype lessons with university students, residencies, and even a veterans group that shared their personal accounts of battle and experiences with post traumatic stress syndrome to help ensure Red Badge of Courage's authenticity. In all instances, 7 Stages artistic staff and teaching artists led the education and outreach programming discussed.

Organizer Biographies

Outline the key staff and/or volunteers who will plan and implement the programming, including their titles, roles and responsibilities, and experience or capacity for managing an NEA Big Read. Include partner organizations' staff as applicable.

7 Stages Artistic Director Heidi S. Howard, co-artistic director Michael Haverty, and Education Director Dorothy Bell will lead The Big Read program. These three leaders are natural collaborators, as their rich backgrounds have encouraged new projects and helped focus existing activities. All are well practiced in community engagement efforts, school outreach, and organizing events that enhance projects initiated by 7 Stages.

Howard will direct 7 Stages' theatrical response, 'Home Brew, Brother, I'm Dying', direct Youth Creates (a theatre intensive for diverse teens) final production, and initiate various artistic response activities with partner groups and professional artists. Further, by visiting the in-school sessions, organizing audience dialogues and hosting the Poetry Slam Event, she will remain engaged with the ongoing programs throughout the year. Howard is well equipped to lead these initiatives, as she served as 7 Stages' Education Director and Production Manager for 12 years prior to being appointed Artistic Director. During that time, she devised curriculum-based programs for 7 Stages and founded Youth Creates, a playwriting and performance training program for teenagers that is now entering its 14th year. Most recently, she directed two world premières and led the culminating events for 2014 and 2015's The Big Read programs by directing 'fml: how Carson McCuller's saved my life', a full stage production inspired by the classic novel *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, and 'F451', a new theatrical adaptation of Bradbury's novel.

Haverty will organize 7 Stages participation at the Decatur Book Festival and events held in conjunction with the Decatur Library and Georgia Center for the Book. While in charge of producing and implementing these events, Haverty will work directly with staff, artists, and colleagues in the community to raise awareness and leverage additional support for the program. Haverty's past experience will help him handle the rigors of managing and implementing this type of programming. Prior to working as the Co-Artistic Director at 7 Stages, Haverty was the founding Artistic Director of Haverty Marionettes, producing unique puppet theater for adult audiences; founded The Object Group, a large ensemble devising interactive performances for the High Museum and Georgia Aquarium; and appeared and directed extensively at The Center for Puppetry Arts. Haverty has received multiple grants for his original productions that were well managed and resulted in successful outcomes.

7 Stages Education Director Dorothy Bell will implement The Big Read in-school activities - acting as a guide in writing, artistic expression, and performance while directing the artistic process of the students. Bell is a world-renowned songwriter and performer, and in 2014 and 2015, she successfully implemented The Big Read in-school activities. The findings from these years are informing her work with student artistic responses in 2016. Bell will also lead the three events held in partnership with the Decatur Library, including a book club and a keynote lecture. Prior to her role as Education Director, Bell worked as a Teaching Artist for 7 Stages implementing in-school residencies and workshops for many years. Bell has collaborated with Howard in the Youth Creates summer program for over six years, and is well equipped with community engagement and artistic teaching experience. She has organized the curriculum for The Atlanta School and travelled to teach with the Youth Creates ensemble in Holland for four years, always enabling excellence and breeding confidence. Through creative thinking and theme-based curriculum, students will gain hands-on experience in the process of creating art for the public. This process allows students to gain self-confidence through artistic expression, collaborate with diverse peers, learn skills practical to career development, and ultimately become better humans while connecting literature with their everyday lives.

NEA Big Read: Proposal Budget

Use this form to illustrate the funding sources for your program, including the required 1 to 1 match and details of how you intend to spend the grant and matching funds. For additional directions on how to complete this form, refer to the budget instructions document. Please call the NEA Big Read team at Arts Midwest with any questions at 612.238.8010.

Seven Stages, Inc. dba 7 Stages

Revenues

In the revenues section of this form (page 1), indicate all anticipated income for the program from all sources.

Grants and cash contributions

Input your grant request and any other grants or cash contributions you expect to receive. Federal funds (direct or indirect) may not be used toward the 1 to 1 match. Examples of eligible matching items for this section are cash donations from individuals, community grants, or cash from your partner organizations. Indicate if items are confirmed or pending.

Funding Source	Detail	Amount
NEA Big Read	Grant request (pending)	\$ 20,000.00
Fulton County Contracts for Services	Percent General Operating	\$ 4,000.00
City of Atlanta Contract for Services	Percent General Operating	\$ 4,000.00
Shubert	Percent General Operating	\$ 4,000.00
Individual Giving	Major Donor, Power to Give	\$ 2,000.00
Grants and cash contributions subtotal:		\$ 34,000.00

Applicant organization contributions

Include any funds that the applicant organization will contribute to the program. Examples of eligible matching items for this section are staff salaries, wages, and benefits from the applicant organization, administrative overhead, and facility space. To qualify as matching resources, these items also must be listed in the program budget as expenses.

Funding Source	Detail	Amount
7 Stages	Artistic Director 10%	\$ 4,000.00
7 Stages	Space	\$ 6,000.00
7 Stages	Co-Artistic Director 5%	\$ 2,000.00
Applicant organization contributions subtotal:		\$ 12,000.00

Third party (in-kind) contributions

List items and services partner organizations will contribute. Examples of eligible matching items for this section are partner organizations' salaries and wages, donated space, donated supplies, the cash equivalent value of volunteer services, etc. To qualify as matching resources, these items also must be listed in the program budget as expenses. The dollar value of these non-cash donations should be calculated at their verifiable fair-market value. Proper documentation must be maintained for all items noted as "in-kind."

Funding Source	Detail	Amount
Third party (in-kind) contributions subtotal:		\$ -

Anticipated earned revenue

In the following section list estimates of earned revenue from your Big Read programs. Examples of eligible matching items for this section would be ticket sales or entry fees to events.

Funding Source	Detail	Amount
Workshop	Residencies	\$ 2,500.00
7 Stages	Home Brew ticket sales	\$ 1,000.00
Decatur Book Festival	Performance Fee	\$ 500.00
Anticipated earned revenue subtotal:		\$ 4,000.00

Total match:	The sum of all revenues except the NEA Big Read grant request. The total match must be equal to or greater than the NEA Big Read grant request.	\$ 30,000.00
Total revenues:	The sum of all revenue subtotals.	\$ 50,000.00



DEKALB
COUNTY
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

a place to grow

Darro C. Willey -
Administrative Center
3560 Kensington Rd
Decatur, GA 30032

404.508.7190
Fax: 404.508.7185

dekalblibrary.org

January 26, 2016

Mr. Michael Haverty
Associate Artistic Director
7 Stages Theatre
1105 Euclid Avenue, NE
Atlanta, GA 30307

Dear Mr. Haverty:

On behalf of the DeKalb County Public Library, I am pleased to convey my support for DeKalb County Public Library's participation in the 2016-2017 BIG READ grant through a partnership with the 7 Stages Theatre.

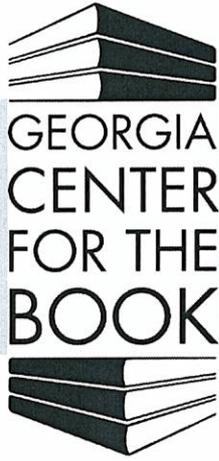
The DeKalb County Public Library consists of 22 branches and serves a diverse population of over 700,000. The library is committed to superior service that promotes a strong, literate community and enhances the quality of life and lifelong learning for patrons of all ages.

I look forward with great anticipation to another opportunity to collaborate with 7 Stages to provide innovative, dynamic programming that meets the needs and wants of the DeKalb County community.

Sincerely,



Alison L. Weissinger
Library Director



GEORGIA CENTER FOR THE BOOK
at the DeKalb County Public Library
215 Sycamore St.
Decatur GA, 30030
404.370.3070, Ext. 2285
georgiacenterforthebook.org

01/20/2016

Dear Mr. Haverty and the staff of 7Stages:

The Georgia Center for the Book and its host, the DeKalb County Public Library, are pleased to partner with the 7 Stages Theatre for its 2016-2017 Big Read grant. Given the wonderful partnership fostered with 7 Stages over the past three years presenting the Big Read, the Georgia Center for the Book gladly will lend its help and support to your efforts for the Big Read 2016-2017. The selection of Edwige Danticat's *Brother, I am Dying* should prove a popular choice with readers throughout the DeKalb County Public Library, and the metropolitan Atlanta area. Given the topics of this work, it has already proven a popular selection at the library, and with book clubs

throughout the area. The DeKalb County Public Library serves a vital role in the lives of all of our patrons; hosting many programs including author lectures, educational and informational classes, movie screenings and musical events, and fostering a collection of materials that is diverse and accessible. All of which embrace the diversity of the growing cross-cultural map of Georgia, so that we can better serve the needs of our citizens.

The Georgia Center for the Book is the largest nonprofit literary presenting organization in the Southeast, successfully connecting readers and writers in all sections of the state through public library initiatives and sponsoring free appearances by hundreds of well-known authors each year. We see this opportunity to partner with 7 Stages as part of our state-wide mission to support libraries and to promote literacy: two of our charter missions from the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress

As a part of the DeKalb County Public Library, The GCB and its' host will support the grant with on-site displays in our branches, publicity and promotional efforts, and public programs that focus on Danticat's work. This year, we look forward to the greater focus on event based programming and the artistic response components of this bid, as we believe they will help us to reach a broader base of patrons, and introduce them to the important themes of *Brother, I am Dying*.

Again, it is our honor to partner once again with the 7 Stages for this most important community project that celebrates the power of the written word.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joe Davich", is written over the word "Sincerely,".

Joe Davich
Executive Director, Georgia Center for the Book