NEWS RELEASE

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**Kenneth Nickel Establishes the R.E.A.A.D.Y. Foundation**

**Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, September 23, 2018 -** Principal dancer, choreographer, artistic director and dance educator Kenneth Nickel of Pittsburgh today announced the establishment of the R.E.A.A.D.Y. (Redefining Education Achieving Associate Degrees for Youths) Foundation. After a lifetime of performing, directing, and establishing innovative educational dance programs and partnerships nationally and internationally, Nickel has chosen to dedicate himself to empowering young people in western Pennsylvania for future success.

Nickel, a native of Pittsburgh’s Greenfield neighborhood, began his professional career at age 16 and was named principal dancer with Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre at age 21. After leaving PBT, he was principal dancer with the Ballet West in Salt Lake City and Dallas Ballet Company. Additionally, Nickel was Artistic Director of Ballet Orlando, La Roche College of Performing Arts where he established a Bachelor of Arts degree for Performing Arts in Dance, and California University of Pennsylvania. In 2009, Nickel was the first to collaborate with a community college to develop an associate degree program in dance education for dancers in high school. “I am truly grateful for the education and support I’ve had through the years,” said Nickel. “And even more grateful to give back to youth in western Pennsylvania who are our future.”

With a robust board of directors including Judy O’Connor, Heidy O’Connor Garth, Jack Hunt (Johnny Angel) and other community leaders, the nonprofit R.E.A.A.D.Y. Foundation has been created to help STEM & Performing Arts students through financial and developmental support. Initially, the R.E.A.A.D.Y. Foundation will offer students scholarships based on scholastic ability, aptitude, and financial need for educational experiences outside of the classroom including summer intensives, workshops, and other opportunities to help further their academic and artistic abilities.

Nickel is in the final phases of developing the R.E.A.A.D.Y. STEM & Performing Arts Charter School in a northern Pittsburgh suburb. The first of its kind in Allegheny County, students will have the unique opportunity to receive an integrated education while earning an associate degree through the Community College of Allegheny College (CCAC) as they graduate high school. “If a student has the passion,” Nickel stated, “we will give them the tools to make them successful.”

Once the R.E.A.A.D.Y. STEM & Performing Arts Charter School is operational, the R.E.A.A.D.Y. Foundation will offer scholarships to assist students in receiving their associate degrees and funding for master classes, materials, and transportation. In addition, proceeds from the foundation will be used to support and enhance the R.E.A.A.D.Y. school facility and student body.

To donate, or for more information about the R.E.A.A.D.Y. Foundation, visit [reaadyfoundation.org](http://www.readyfoundation.org)

The R.E.A.A.D.Y.® Foundation: *Helping Students with a Dream to Face the Challenge and Achieve Success.*

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If you would like more information about this topic, please call Cheryl Aughton, Director of Communications at 724-443-8028, or email [cheryl.aughton@gmail.com](mailto:cheryl.aughton@gmail.com)