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For more information:
Kim Curtis, Executive Director
Jackson School of the Arts
517-416-6974 (cell)
517-784-2389 (office)

Patrick Burtch, City Manager
City of Jackson
517-788-4035

City of Jackson Announces Redevelopment Plans for the Masonic Temple and its Reuse as the New Home for Jackson School of the Arts

"We've run out of space but not out of inspiration," said Jackson School of the Arts Executive Director Kim Curtis. "Today, we are pleased to announce that we've identified a new home in downtown Jackson for our growing organization. With the City of Jackson we share a vision to breathe new life into the historic Masonic Temple and together make this iconic building a point of pride for our City."

Patrick Burtch, City Manager said, "the Mayor and City Council have a vision that lays a foundation for economic resurgence by embracing older historical treasures such as the Masonic Temple why at the same time contributing to Jackson's future generations by helping to offer opportunities such as the one envisioned by Kim Curtis, Executive Director of Jackson School of the Arts. It is a pleasure working with Kim. Her energy for kids is second to none."

Though the Jackson School of the Arts impact is apparent, their ability to sustain vital programs and meet increasing demand is hampered by the size and structure of their current space in the ART 634 building. "We love ART 634. We moved here in

2007 with 40 students. We will leave here having increased enrollment by 2000% and with a deep appreciation for the part ART 634 played in our growth," said Kim Curtis.

Once in the Masonic Temple building, Jackson School of the Arts will become a compelling cultural destination in the heart of downtown Jackson. What will not change is the mission to provide excellent programming in the arts to all children regardless of their financial means. Kim Curtis said, "the families we serve come from vastly diverse economic and cultural backgrounds. The arts have a special way of uniting people."

Founded in 2001, Jackson School of the Arts today presents multiple forms of artistic expression for all ages in art, dance and theater. From its beginning as an after school option for at-risk children, the organization has evolved into a multifaceted center for the arts that serves families from all over Jackson and surrounding counties regardless of their income. Kim Curtis said, "our sliding fee scale works. It levels the playing field for children from disadvantaged circumstances. It's no wonder that our demographics (household income and race) closely match the demographics of our community. "

Programming at Jackson School of the Arts is robust with 93 classes a week, four to five student plays per season, 2 large student art exhibits annually, after school, home school and summer programs, Kids Create: a preschool experience, Birthday Parties, adult art, ballet, tap and hip hop classes, ballroom lessons, private lessons, special events every month and of course the Annual Fairy Festival. Jackson School of the Arts is also home to a Mini Museum, Haus of Dance, a pre-professional student dance company, a snack cafe and the Best Little Dance Store.

Grounded in their mission, the relocation to the Masonic Temple gives the creative team at Jackson School of the Arts the capacity to provide more opportunities for the community and maintain and build upon its role as a leader in providing arts education.

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