

Acting on a need for family-friendly drama

Theater company headed to a new home in Oak Cliff

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By **TRINA TERRELL** / Special Contributor to The Dallas Morning News

When newlywed Teresa Coleman Wash relocated to Dallas five years ago from Atlanta, she arrived with more than just her bags. She also brought her community theater company to town.

Mrs. Wash, a native of Albany, Ga., says she decided to create TeCo Theatrical Productions in 1993 after realizing there was a need.

"I realized that a complete marketplace of people were being deprived of good, wholesome family entertainment," Mrs. Wash said.

Mrs. Wash left the Atlanta radio station where she was working and founded what she describes as a multicultural theater company dedicated to promoting awareness of family values through dramatic artistic expression.

Shortly after coming to Dallas, she became executive director of the community theater, adjusting to being a new wife and becoming a mother of two.

Since her relocation to Dallas, TeCo has earned contracts with the Dallas and Richardson school districts and the city of Dallas' Office of Cultural Affairs in addition to coordinating an annual season of performances. Those performances take place at the Hall of State in Fair Park.

"Even though we have served 3,000 children and 2,000 adults with our programs, I'm excited about everything that's happening," she said. "And the best part is realizing that it's only just begun."

Next month, TeCo will move into the 91-year-old former Bluebird Theater near the Bishop Arts District in Oak Cliff. According to Mrs. Wash, the new location will feature a 218-seat theater with dressing rooms, administrative offices, educational workshop areas and storage spaces. It will host seasonal performances as well as classes that will be open to the public.

To date, more than \$250,000 has been raised from foundations, corporations and individual donors. The total cost of the renovation project is \$600,000. The Harold Simmons Foundation awarded TeCo a grant totaling \$20,000 for the renovation project in April. Two weeks ago, the AT&T Foundation donated \$8,000 for the renovation.

"When we acquired the 10,000-square-foot building from one of our anonymous donors in 2002, we understood our responsibility to extend our services to all of humanity," Mrs. Wash said. "We are honored to work in the community we serve."



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HINNANT/DMN**
Teresa Coleman Wash says TeCo Theatrical Productions is dedicated to promoting family values through drama.