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**For Immediate Release**

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**Santa Barbara Dance Alliance Honors**

**Derrick Curtis with 12<sup>th</sup> Lifetime Achievement Award**

**Summary Facts:**

- Derrick Curtis, long-time SBDA Board Member and beloved ballroom dance teacher receives 12<sup>th</sup> Lifetime Achievement Award for commitment to dance in Santa Barbara county.
- Following opening night performance of NEW WORKS: Santa Barbara Choreographers on January 9, 2009 at Center Stage Theater, 751 Paseo Nuevo, Santa Barbara. Performance begins at 8pm.
- For tickets, contact the Center Stage Box Office at (805) 963-0408 or go to [www.centerstagetheater.org](http://www.centerstagetheater.org).
- For more information, contact Santa Barbara Dance Alliance at (805) 966-6950 or visit [www.sbdancealliance.org](http://www.sbdancealliance.org).
- Editors note: **High Resolution 300dpi photos available under "Press Kits" on the SBDA website.**

Santa Barbara, CA – Long-time Santa Barbara Dance Alliance (SBDA) Board Member and beloved ballroom dance teacher Derrick Curtis has been named the winner of SBDA's 12<sup>th</sup> Lifetime Achievement Award. He will be honored and presented with his award following the opening night performance of NEW WORKS: Santa Barbara Choreographers on January 9<sup>th</sup> at Center Stage Theater.

Mr. Curtis has been dancing and teaching youth, teens and adults locally for ten years with his wife and dance partner Trudie Curtis. They offer instruction in ballroom, Latin, line and party dances. Their business, Embody Dance, provides ballroom dance instruction for youth and teens at the Teen Center and local public and private schools. Mr. Curtis teaches ballroom dance at Santa Barbara Dance Center and is a recreational therapist and physical education specialist at Montessori Center School. He has served ten years on the Board of Directors of Santa Barbara Dance Alliance and is Vice President of the Board of Directors for The Brotherhood of Santa Barbara. For more information, visit [www.embodydance.net](http://www.embodydance.net).

On receiving the award, Mr. Curtis is both honored and surprised. "When I met with Julie McLeod [SBDA Executive Director], I thought we were just having a meeting. I started in on all the projects I'm involved in. That's when Julie reached into her purse, pulled out a mirror and asked, 'What do you see?' I was puzzled until she said I was looking at the winner!"

Mr. Curtis's passion for dance was ignited as a young child when he saw a vintage film of someone dancing the Lindy Hop. Although he had no formal dance training, as the only boy of 10 grandkids, all his sisters and cousins knew how to dance. "I was the worst dancer growing up," he said. "I figured I'd better learn to dance before I hurt somebody. I needed some structure." After completing his undergraduate degree in physical education and graduate work in therapeutic recreation at Chico State, Mr. Curtis settled in Santa Barbara

in 1985. His training as an educator, coupled with the belief that movement is healing and makes us better communicators, continues to inform his career as a teacher of dance.

“Derrick is incredibly community minded,” said Julie McLeod. “He does classes that involve children, really majorly at-risk youth, and feels that by involving kids in dance, he is giving them direction for the future. He continues to dazzle us with the spirit he shares so unselfishly.”

Mr. Curtis’s weekly dance card is full: he is a recreational therapist and physical education specialist at the Montessori Center School, spends his evenings teaching couples ballroom dancing and private lessons at Santa Barbara Dance Center, and with his wife and dance partner Trudie Curtis runs Embody Dance, providing ballroom dance instruction for youth and teens at the Teen Center and local public and private schools. And, he always saves time to strut his stuff on the dance floor at local clubs like SoHo, Stateside, the Biltmore, and the Carrillo Rec center. “Dancing is still an outlet for my self expression. It’s fun, and I enjoy the spirit of letting go. I always tell my students that a man may lead, but it’s up to the woman to figure out how to get there. We can improvise... as long as we get there in 8.”

Four years ago, Mr. Curtis was given the gift of a new kidney after being on the waiting list for 5 years. With all of the encompassing difficulties he never missed a beat, teaching youngsters, as well as acting as production director and emcee of Dance Alliance’s BASSH: Ballroom, Argentine Tango, Swing, Salsa & Hip Hop since its first performance in 2001. His ability to attract the community’s prime dancers and his ease and charm on stage has made BASSH a popular performance event each year.

Part of Mr. Curtis’s mission as a teacher is to keep social dancing alive and thriving. His involvement with The Brotherhood, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting brotherhood within the Black and greater community of Santa Barbara county, has been a catalyst for passing on the legacy of African-American dance roots. Mr. Curtis is currently preparing his dancers for performances celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday and Black History Month, and for BASSH in March.

Although Mr. Curtis is retiring from ten years on the SBDA board, as he takes on the role of Vice President for The Brotherhood, he will continue to use dance as a way to build community through monthly Motown Dance Party and a swing and Latin Dance program for youth. “Dancing is always going to be a part of society. I can go any where in the world and ask a woman to dance. Every man should be able to do that,” he said. “I like teaching men confidence – not being afraid to move, to feel free and express themselves. I want them to have this gift.”

For more information on Santa Barbara Dance Alliance call (805) 966-6950 or go to [www.sbdancealliance.org](http://www.sbdancealliance.org). To purchase tickets for NEW WORKS: Santa Barbara Choreographers and see Mr. Curtis receive his award, contact the Center Stage Box Office at (805) 963-0408 or visit [www.centerstagetheater.org](http://www.centerstagetheater.org).

Santa Barbara Dance Alliance is a unique service organization focused on promoting dance and dance education in Santa Barbara County. In addition to NEW WORKS: Santa Barbara Choreographers, SBDA presents year round performances, community events including the DaM Festival (Multicultural Dance and Music), BASSH: Ballroom, Argentine Tango, Swing, Salsa & Hip Hop at the Lobero March 13th & 14th, master classes in collaboration with UCSB Arts & Lectures and ON THE VERGE: Teen Choreographers Showcase. In the past five years, SBDA has awarded 99 scholarships to local, talented, dedicated young artists in need of financial support.