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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Geva Theatre Center honors
Essie Calhoun

for contribution to diversity in the community
and in the arts.

Geva establishes *Essie Calhoun Diversity in the Arts Award* as an enduring tribute.

Rochester, N.Y., April 4, 2011 – **Essie Calhoun**, Retired Chief Diversity Officer, Director of Community Affairs, Vice President of Eastman Kodak Company and Chair of the 2011 United Way of Greater Rochester Campaign, was honored at Geva Theatre Center on Saturday, April 2nd.

The 8:30pm performance of August Wilson’s *Radio Golf* was dedicated to her, in recognition of her many contributions to diversity in the community and in the arts.

In addition, Geva Theatre Center has created the **Essie Calhoun Diversity in the Arts Award**. Ms. Calhoun is the first recipient of this award, which will be given annually to a person or organization that promotes and encourages diversity in the arts.

Geva’s Artistic Director Mark Cuddy remarked, “It gives me a special joy to honor Essie Calhoun in this manner on behalf of all Rochester organizations that have benefited from her dogged support and clear philanthropic vision. Personally, Essie has been such a stalwart champion of Geva’s diverse programming that I always feel her presence when season planning. I knew that she and Kodak would be there to stand with us.”

The award was designed by local artist **Nancy Gong**, one of America’s foremost glass artists. Ms. Gong combines the traditional techniques of stained glass craftsmen and stone carvers with her own style of creating texture and painting to craft pieces which are coveted by collectors from all over the world. The Essie Calhoun Diversity in the Arts Award is a stunning, circular piece of glass, with hues of sunset pink graduated to champagne and carved on one end with a diversity quilt pattern.

The Essie Calhoun Diversity in the Arts Award recognizes that art allows for the expression of truths and beliefs and helps us gain an understanding of one another and our world. It further acknowledges that a mixture of cultures stimulates creativity, the sharing of ideas, and the building of a common collective future, which has always been close to Ms. Calhoun's heart.

"Going forward, whomever receives the annual "Essie" Award will be standing on some pretty broad shoulders," commented Mark Cuddy. "It's a fitting tribute to the legacy one person can build in our community."

**For further information or to arrange interviews, please contact:
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GEVA THEATRE CENTER

Geva Theatre Center is Rochester's leading professional theatre and the most attended regional theatre in New York State. Founded in 1972, Geva attracts over 170,000 patrons annually, including more than 16,000 students. The 552-seat Elaine P. Wilson Mainstage offers a wide variety of shows, from musicals to American and world classics.

The 180-seat Ron & Donna Fielding Nextstage is home to Geva's own series of cutting-edge drama, comedy and musical theatre; Geva Comedy Improv; Geva's New Play Reading Series and the Hornet's Nest - an innovative play-reading series facilitating community-wide discussion on controversial topics. The Nextstage also hosts visiting companies of both local and international renown.

Geva Theatre Center offers a wide variety of educational, outreach and literary programs, nurturing audiences and artists alike. Since 1995 the organization has been led by Artistic Director Mark Cuddy.

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