



Media Release  
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### **Sensory-Friendly Shakespeare Coming to Fredericksburg, One Day Only**

FREDERICKSBURG, VA—Shakespeare gets a sensory-friendly makeover as it comes to Fredericksburg, Va.. In a special event on Saturday, April 2, Staunton-based Polaris Shakespeare Company is teaming with STEPVA, the local 501(c)3 theater arts nonprofit for people with disabilities to host a dance workshop and sensory-friendly performance of the comedy *As You Like It*.

The event will take place on Saturday, April 2 at Central Rappahannock Regional Library Headquarters on Caroline street. The workshop will allow STEPVA participants to meet the cast and learn about Elizabethan dance, including the specific sequence at the end of the play. Following a quick break, the theater company will stage an abbreviated, sensory-friendly performance of *As You Like It* and those who participated in the workshop will be invited to join the dance in the final scene.

Members of the Polaris Shakespeare Company are in their final year of study in the Mary Baldwin University Master of Letters/Master of Fine Arts in Shakespeare and Performance program. STEPVA board president Corey Holmes is an alumna of the program, and while teaching theater at Rodney Thompson Middle School in Stafford a few years ago, she noticed some of her autistic students particularly enjoyed iambic pentameter. It didn't take much for Holmes to connect STEPVA with the Mary Baldwin MFA program. You could say the stars aligned for STEPVA, which operates with the mission “to empower people with special needs through artistic expression and sensory exploration.”

“When we were planning our season and creating our mission statement last May, something that was and is very important to us is accessibility,” said Amy Ippolito, actor and educator with Polaris Shakespeare Company. “We were so lucky to have Corey and Jan [Monroe, STEPVA executive director] come and talk to us about how to create a sensory friendly environment and our excitement grew even more. We strive as a company to foster a connection and community through theater and getting the chance to work with StepVA feels like it was meant to be!”

The dance workshop will take place at 10 a.m., and the sensory-friendly performance, which is free and open to the public, begins around 11 a.m.

The event will be a learning experience for everyone, regardless of age or theater background.

“As theater makers, and as a company, we are always looking at how we can be more accessible and inclusive to our audiences, as they are the most important part of theater,” Ippolito said. “We are so grateful to have this opportunity to learn just how to do that. Learning how to make our performances more sensory friendly is invaluable because you never know who is in your audience, being able to learn how to adapt, adding little moments of signaling for bigger or louder moments is something we can bring to any and every performance.”

To reserve a seat for the performance, click [HERE](#).

For more information about Polaris Shakespeare Theater, click [HERE](#).

And for more information about STEPVA or to make a tax-deductible donation, click [HERE](#).

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**STEP VA, Inc.** is a 501c3 non-profit organization that provides sensory-based theater and arts programs for individuals with disabilities. Its vision is to transform the world by offering each individual the opportunity to flourish in the community.