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**SEE CHICAGO DANCE CELEBRATES ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY
WITH ITS 2025 BOLD IMPACT GALA COMMUNITY CELEBRATION
& AWARDS PRESENTATION, TUESDAY, SEPT. 30, AT
VENUE WEST**

**This Annual Celebration of Chicago's Vibrant Dance Community Honors
Kevin Iega Jeff with the See Chicago Dance Legacy Award, and Julie
Nakagawa with the Distinguished Service to the Dance Field Award**

CHICAGO – [See Chicago Dance](#) (SCD), the dance industry's nonprofit service organization, is proud to announce its [20th Anniversary Bold Impact Gala Community Celebration & Awards Presentation](#), will be held Tuesday, Sept. 30 from 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. at Venue West, 221 N. Paulina and its 2025 Co-chairs are **Mashaune Hardy** and **Vin Reed** with gala host for the evening, NBC5's **Lexi Sutter**. Individual tickets are \$325 and will be available at [SeeChicagoDance.com](#) on Wednesday, July 16 at 12 p.m. Table sponsorships (with seating for ten) are still available, starting at \$3,000. For information on sponsorships, contact See Chicago Dance Executive Director Julia Mayer at [Julia@SeeChicagoDance.com](#).

The annual Gala Community Celebration & Awards Presentation gathers 250 dance supporters and artists to celebrate Chicago's dynamic dance community and honor individuals who have made a significant and sustained impact. In 2025, See Chicago Dance presents the **See Chicago Dance Legacy Award** to **Kevin Iega Jeff**, co-founder of Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, choreographer, director, dance educator, cultural community builder and creative consultant. Also being honored is **Julie Nakagawa**, co-founder and artistic director of DanceWorks Chicago and former director of Hubbard Street 2 with the **Distinguished Service to the Dance Field Award**.

NBC5 Chicago's **Lexi Sutter** will serve as this year's gala host. Event co-chairs are **Mashaune Hardy** and **Vin Reed**. The 2025 Host Committee members are **Jan Bartoszek** (Hedwig Dances), **Pamela Crutchfield**, **Robin Edwards** (Chicago Multi-Cultural Dance Center), **Patti Eylar**, **Carol Fox+** (Carol Fox & Associates), **Ted Grady**, **Judie Moore Green+** (Auditorium Theater, retired), **Winifred Haun** (Winifred Haun & Dancers), **Kevin McGirr**, **Meghan McNamara+** (Levitt Pavilion Denver), **Michael McStraw+** (Chicago Dance History Project), **Niki Morrison+** (Carol Fox & Associates), **Brian Smith+** (Joffrey Ballet) and **Linda Swayze** (Joffrey Ballet).
+ Connotes past See Chicago Dance board presidents

“This year, See Chicago Dance turns 20! In the current arts climate, that in itself is absolutely something to celebrate,” says **Executive Director Julia Mayer**. “At last year’s gala, we celebrated the origins of our organization. This year, we are celebrating our future. As always, we invite our supporters and our community to honor those who have made a bold impact on the city of Chicago through dance. We are delighted to be honoring Lega and Julie for their unparalleled contributions. We are also putting SCD’s accomplishments, like our magnificent new website, front and center. We want to be sure more and more people understand the value of the work we do for so many dancers and dance lovers. We hope to surpass past fundraising thresholds so we are prepared to meet the future with the resources and capacity our community deserves.”

In addition to being a community celebration, this gala is See Chicago Dance’s annual fundraiser and includes a reception, a seated dinner with awards presentation, a paddle raise, raffle of experience packages, and performances by **DanceWorks Chicago** and **Deeply Rooted Dance Theater**. More details on the evening’s program will be forthcoming.

The location for the event, Venue West, is fully accessible. See Chicago Dance will provide ASL interpretation, CART captioning, and large print programs. If guests require other accommodations, they may contact See Chicago Dance’s Membership & Operations Manager, Kennedy Ward, at Kennedy@SeeChicagoDance.com.

ABOUT KEVIN LEGA JEFF, 2025 LEGACY AWARD RECIPIENT

Kevin Lega Jeff is a celebrated dancer, choreographer, artistic director and innovative leader. Recognized by the Juilliard School as one of its 100 Outstanding Alumni, he’s been honored alongside legends like Viola Davis and Aretha Franklin. *Newcity* listed Jeff among Chicago’s top performers and Mayor Lori Lightfoot appointed him to Chicago’s Cultural Advisory Council. He’s danced on Broadway in *The Wiz*, on TV at the 1994 Academy Awards and choreographed the film, Spike Lee’s “She’s Gotta Have It.” With over 50 choreographed pieces to his name, he has been commissioned by premier companies and theaters both nationally and internationally.

As a community-focused artist, Jeff has worked on global projects like Grit & Grace and Swamp Gravy. He’s educated at institutions from Howard University to the University of Kwazulu-Natal in South Africa. Originally from New York, he started at The Bernice Johnson Cultural Arts Center and later founded JUBILATION! Dance Company. He co-founded Chicago’s Deeply Rooted Dance Theater in 1995, setting the stage for the future Deeply Rooted Center for Black Dance and Creative Communities. After leading Deeply Rooted for 24 years, Jeff moved to its emeritus role in 2022, steering new projects like Creative Communities and GOSHEN, featuring the music of Grammy Award-winner Donald Lawrence. When asked to reflect on his philosophy, Jeff says, “I am influenced by the spectrum of energies in Creation and my mentors before me. Dance and art reveal our inner genius, reflecting who we are and who we strive to become.”

ABOUT JULIE NAKAGAWA, 2025 DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO THE DANCE COMMUNITY RECIPIENT

From Evanston, Illinois, Julie Nakagawa was a featured dancer with Christopher D’Amboise’s Off Center Ballet, Cleveland Ballet and Twyla Tharp Dance. She has also performed in “Ruth Page’s The Nutcracker” and “Die Fledermaus.” Returning to Chicago upon her retirement from dancing, she has been especially interested in the development of dance artists and their related artistic collaborators. At the invitation

of Lou Conte, Nakagawa joined the staff of Lou Conte Dance Studio in January 1994 and rose to the position of associate director. In addition, she led Hubbard Street 2 from its inception in 1997 through February 2007. As the artistic director of the second company of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, she nurtured young dancers and established the National Choreographic Competition to provide creative opportunities for emerging dance makers. A sought-after teacher, she has taught classes for dance studios, university programs and companies, locally, nationally and internationally. She has served as a member and officer of the Board of Trustees of Dance/USA, has engaged as a mentor in multiple pairings through Dance/USA's Institute for Leadership Training, has been a panelist for peer review panels including the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, McKnight Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Princess Grace Foundation and US Artists International. The Chicago Foundation for Women's Asian American Leadership Council honored Nakagawa for her work in the creative arts. She is grateful for the opportunity to lead DanceWorks Chicago, a creative incubator fostering a diverse next generation of movers and makers, empowering young artists to cultivate their unique voices in the dance community through skill acquisition and development; collaborations and relationship-building with a global perspective; intense and intentional mentorship and performances that shine a light on dancers and dance.

ABOUT SEE CHICAGO DANCE

See Chicago Dance is a nonprofit service organization with the mission to advocate for the dance field and strengthen a diverse range of dance organizations and artists through services and programs that build and engage audiences. Its vision is to fearlessly inspire an ever-growing inclusive community to share in and spread the power of dance in Chicago.

See Chicago Dance is the source for all things dance with the city's most comprehensive resource for dance information and one of the largest—and newly re-designed—websites in the United States dedicated to the art form. Its two-pronged approach focuses on building audiences while developing a more cohesive dance community.

For audience members, See Chicago Dance offers a dynamic calendar of dance performances and experiences, Hot Deal ticket discounts, professionally written reviews and previews, and listings for more than 400 dance organizations.

For dance artists and organizations, See Chicago Dance provides a full range of Programs and Industry Resources to help build audiences, improve skills, and foster appreciation of dance in all its forms.

See Chicago Dance's board of directors includes **Amanda Banks** (vice president), **Debra Bernstein-Siegel**, **Michael Foster**, **Ladonna Freidheim**, **Chelsea Hoy**, **Erik Kaiko**, **Bradlee Lathon**, **Danielle Pender**, **Jorge Perez** (president), **Allyson Ratliff**, **Marisa C. Santiago** (secretary), **Kia Smith**, **Dawn Stanislaw** (treasurer) and **Sarah Venuti Yates**.

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