



# NEWS

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**TONY-AWARD WINNING ACTOR BEN VEREEN VISITS SUFFOLK COUNTY  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Selden, NY – Tony-award winning actor Ben Vereen offered a two-day master class to students in Suffolk County Community College’s Theatre Arts Program’s production of *Hair* on October 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> in the Shea Theatre of the Ammerman Campus in Selden. As part of Mr. Vereen’s visit, he attended a lunch hosted by the Suffolk Community College Foundation for members of the College’s upcoming production of *Hair*, faculty of the theatre arts program, and several elite donors.

Dr. Shaun L. McKay, President of Suffolk County Community College, said, “This was a great visit and a great day. Ben Vereen is a Broadway legend and the College has been honored to host him. I am also grateful for the time he has spent sharing his gifts and talent with our students, because this opportunity was all about them. Mr. Vereen has demonstrated that events like this are about the community and giving something back. Through our theatre arts program our students are transformed and empowered as individuals.”

Mr. Vereen noted, “Everything is an art form. Life itself is an art form. Before we began the class, I asked the students to be prepared to be transformed; I told them to connect to the characters not just as characters, but as expressions of life. I have visited many colleges and universities and I have never seen a president become such proponent insisting that the arts be at the forefront. How blessed you are to have Dr. McKay. You should praise this community college and this man.”

Students thoroughly enjoyed Mr. Vereen’s master class and emerged with comments that ranged from “You’re so focused on him, and he’s so focused on you!” to “I discovered a piece of myself I never knew before.”

*Hair* will be showing at the Shea Theatre on the College’s Ammerman Campus in Selden on November 20-23 and 29-30 at 8 p.m. and November 24 and December 1 at 2 p.m.

Ben Vereen shot to Broadway stardom with his starring role as Leading Player in Bob Fosse's 1972 show *Pippin*, which won Vereen a Tony Award as best actor in a musical. Ben Vereen became a famously versatile song-and-dance man, a stage star who appeared occasionally in feature films and television. His most famous roles on TV include African slave Chicken George in the miniseries *Roots*

(1977), Jeff Goldblum's partner in the 1980 cop show *Tenspeed and Brownshoe* (Vereen was Tenspeed) and the grumpy police captain in *Silk Stalkings* (1991-1993). His feature films have included *Funny Lady* (1975, starring Barbra Streisand), *All That Jazz* (1979, also directed by Bob Fosse) and *Idlewild* (2006, starring Terrence Howard). In 1992, Ben Vereen was accidentally hit by a car driven by music producer David Foster in Malibu, California. The injuries seemed career-threatening, but the following year Vereen made a triumphal Broadway return in *Jelly's Last Jam*. In the 1990s, Ben Vereen guest-starred on TV's *Star Trek: The Next Generation* as the father of engineer Geordi LaForge, played by LeVar Burton. In *Roots*, Ben Vereen played the grandson of another Burton character, Kunta Kinte.



**Photo Caption:**

Cast members from the College's upcoming production of *Hair* stand behind (left to right, seated): Oya Bangura, College alumna and choreographer for the production; Dr. Shaun L. McKay-President of Suffolk County Community College and actor Ben Vereen.

**About Suffolk County Community College**

Suffolk County Community College (SCCC) is the largest community college in the State University of New York (SUNY) system, enrolling approximately 26,000 students at its three campuses in Selden, Brentwood and Riverhead. SCCC offers the Associate in Arts (A.A.), Associate in Science (A.S.), and Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.) degrees, as well as a variety of certificate programs. Offering affordable college tuition, a highly respected Honors program, extensive extracurricular activities, championship athletic teams, and numerous transfer programs, SCCC is a first-choice college for Long Island students. Visit us online at [sunysuffolk.edu](http://sunysuffolk.edu).

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