

## Essence of ‘play’ evoked through gaming, comedy and improvisation at 2012 Spirit & Place Festival

*17<sup>th</sup> Annual Public Conversation will feature Jane McGonigal, Susan Sparks and David Darling*

*Sunday, Nov. 11, 2012  
The Toby, IMA, 5:30 p.m., Free Admission*

INDIANAPOLIS – Bestselling author and internationally-acclaimed game designer Jane McGonigal, stand-up comedian and Baptist minister Susan Sparks, and Grammy-winning cellist and former Hoosier David Darling will combine their talents for a night of conversation on the role of play in our individual and communal life. Each presenter will also provide a brief sampling of their own playful gifts. The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Public Conversation occurs on the Spirit & Place Festival closing evening, Sunday, Nov. 11, 2012. The central Indiana festival begins Friday, Nov. 2.

A project of The Polis Center at the IU School of Liberal Arts-IUPUI the Spirit & Place Festival is a 10-day civic celebration designed to stimulate conversation, community building, and civic action through creative collaborations among arts, religion, and humanities. More than 20,000 central Indiana residents will be impacted by festival programs created by over 100 organizations with a special emphasis on this year’s theme, “Play.”

**Jane McGonigal** is a world-renowned game designer, specializing in alternate reality games. She is currently the director of games research & development at the Institute for the Future, where she is able to create games with humanitarian purposes; her #1 goal in life is to see a game developer win a Nobel Peace Prize. Her *New York Times* bestseller, *Reality is Broken: Why Games Make us better and How They Can Change the World*, explains how games connected to reality can be used to solve real world problems.

**Susan Sparks** has mastered the ability of combining comedy and religion. Formerly a trial lawyer, Rev. Sparks is now the senior pastor of the historic Madison Avenue Baptist Church in New York City. She is the author of *Laugh Your Way to Grace: Reclaiming the Spiritual Power of Humor* and has had the opportunity of spreading her trust in laughter to *O Magazine*, the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, etc. She tours nationally with the Laugh in Peace Tour as a professional comedian.

**David Darling**, is a native Hoosier. Born and raised in Elkhart, Ind., Darling graduated from Indiana State University and began teaching music in Evansville schools. He journeyed to become the principal cellist for the Nashville Symphony Orchestra and was a member of the Grammy-winning Paul Winter Consort. In 2010, his compact disc “Prayer for Compassion” won a Grammy for best New Age album. In hopes of inspiring others to enjoy “free improvisation,” Darling created Music for People in 1986. The organization uses game-like methods to teach improvisation and promote music as a means of self expression.

For details on these and all Spirit & Place programs and events, visit [www.spiritandplace.org](http://www.spiritandplace.org).

## **About the Spirit & Place Festival**

The Spirit & Place Festival promotes civic engagement, respect for diversity, and public imagination through 40 events each year during November. Spirit & Place is a collaborative community project managed by The Polis Center, part of the Indiana University School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI. Major financial contributors include Lilly Endowment Inc.; the Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation, BohlsenPR; The Indianapolis Foundation, an affiliate of CICF; IUPUI; IU School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI; University of Indianapolis, and more than 200 other community partners and donors. For more information, call The Polis Center at (317) 274-2455 or visit [www.spiritandplace.org](http://www.spiritandplace.org). The 2012 festival takes place November 2-11.

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