

# spotlight



May/June 2016 \$2.50

american association of community theatre

## How To Start a Special Needs Program

**Last Chance!**  
**New York**  
**Adventure**  
**2016**

**Trending**  
**Boards**

**AACT**  
**NewPlayFest**

**National**  
**Awards**





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# PETER AND THE ST★R CATCHER

Tony-nominated *Peter and the Starcatcher* upends the century-old story of how a miserable orphan comes to be “The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up” (a.k.a. Peter Pan). A wildly theatrical adaptation of Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson’s best-selling novels, the play was conceived for the stage by directors Roger Rees and Alex Timbers and written by Rick Elice with music by Wayne Barker.

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**Murray Chase**  
AACT President  
2015-2017

The “little wow” leads to a thriving theatre.

I first encountered this term when I read Dennis Snow’s *Lessons From the Mouse*, an excellent customer service book. Mr. Snow advanced from entry-level employee with the Disney Corporation to upper management. And we know that Disney is excellent at maximizing profits.

**The little wow may be as simple as loaning an umbrella to a customer.**

Mr. Snow’s example was replacing - at Magic Kingdom - a fallen \$4 ice cream cone at no cost to the customer, a small child. By spending a few cents on ice cream, he saved the family’s first day of vacation, making them more amenable to spending much more. I later mentioned that to a friend who works for Disney. He told me that’s an active practice there and related a story about a “popcorn” rescue he conducted at Epcot—while off-duty.

Our staff, and many of our volunteers, are now engaged in trying to create “little wows” and celebrating them as we go along. The sense of goodwill can be palpable.

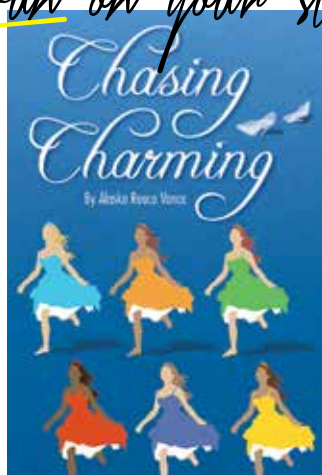
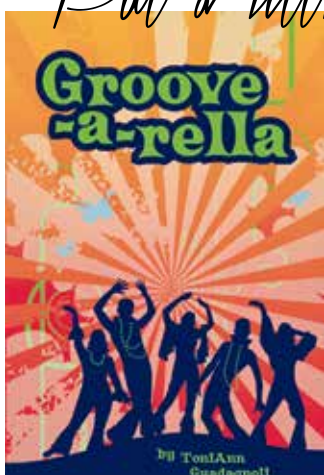
A brief thank-you note to a donor - no matter the size of the gift - may well stimulate larger donations. I’ve seen one such note create an increase from \$100 per year to a gift of \$100,000. The little wow may be as simple as loaning an umbrella to a customer or walking her to her car on a dark night. It could be giving a cough drop and a \$2 bottle of water free to a customer with a cough, or a restaurant coupon to a volunteer who stayed late. How about a little extra praise for a fellow worker’s finished project? Or greeting people - by name, if possible, when they arrive?

Little wows aren’t hard to do. They’re fun. They make the recipient - and you--feel good. And they create the personal touch of community theatre that separates us from more impersonal organizations. We create loyal volunteers, customers, and donors... which helps us thrive.

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*Put a little fun on your stage this summer!*



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Cast members from The Penguin Project At Gettysburg Community Theatre's 2014 production of *Disney's Peter Pan Jr.*

Photo courtesy of Cindie Leer. Leer Photography is the official photographer of Gettysburg Community Theatre.

## Contacting AACT

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AACT welcomes *Spotlight* input and requests for advertising rates. Contact David Cockerell at david@aac.org to submit content. Contact Darlene DeLorenzo at darlene@aac.org for advertising rates and specs. David and Darlene are also available at the phone numbers above.



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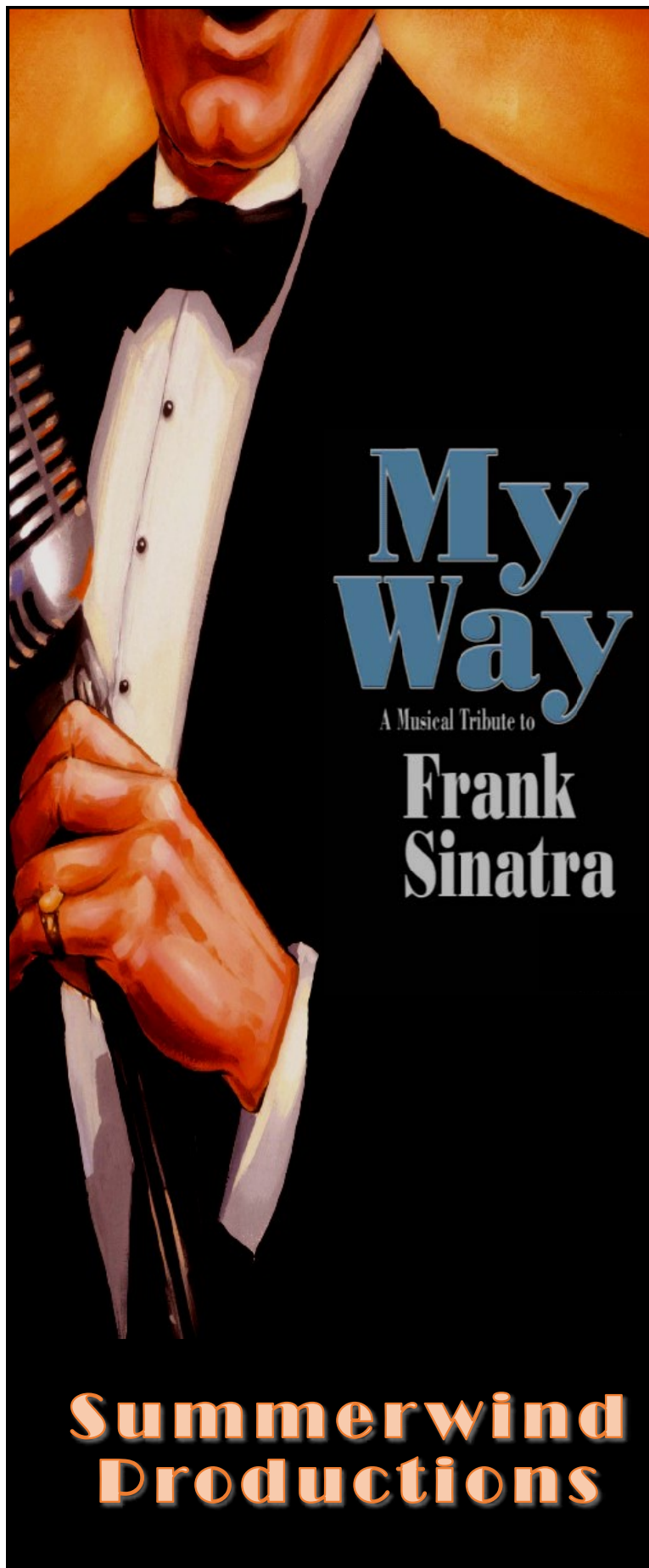
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Taming of the Shrew: Shake, Rattle, and Roll

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The Incredible Jungle Journey of Fenda Maria  
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## Upcoming Meetings

### AACT Summer Meetings 2016

July 5 - 9, 2016

### Annual AACT Membership Meeting and Awards

July 9, 2016

New York City, NY as part of the AACT New York Adventure 2016

see details on page 12

*Meetings are open. Contact the AACT office or visit [aact.org/calendar](http://aact.org/calendar) for details.*

## Upcoming Events

### AACT 2016 TEAM Conference

August 19-21, 2016

Des Moines, Iowa

Hosted by Des Moines Community Playhouse

An expanded educational conference, with four tracks focusing on theatre education programs, artistic direction of a theatre, development and marketing, and technical theatre.

Visit [aact.org/team](http://aact.org/team) for details

## Spotlight

*Spotlight* is published bimonthly by the American Association of Community Theatre for its members and is annually distributed to an expanded list of known community theatre organizations and interested individuals.

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## AACT Insurance Program

AACT organizational members are eligible to participate in property, liability, and other coverages of the AACT Insurance Program.



For more information,  
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# Theatrical Properties: How Much Coverage Is Enough?



by Ken Roberts

We frequently get last-minute calls from theatres that are renting equipment, scenery, costumes, or props for an upcoming show, and they've discovered that before they can leave the premises where the aforementioned theatrical properties are being rented, they must show proof of insurance. The required insurance limit must usually be at least as high as the value of the properties being rented, which can create problems, whether they already have theatrical properties coverage included with their current policy or not. There is always a hesitancy to add coverage to a policy for obvious reasons, meaning that any added expenses for mounting a production can directly affect a theatre's bottom line. However, not increasing the coverage limits can have detrimental consequences of its own.

For theatres that already purchase some theatrical properties coverage for their own equipment, etc., a catastrophic loss means that they have not only lost their own equipment, but the equipment that was rented, so not having enough coverage for both means that somebody is going without replacing their property, and you can bet that the rental/lease contract makes sure that the renting entity gets paid first, leaving the theatre high and dry going forward.

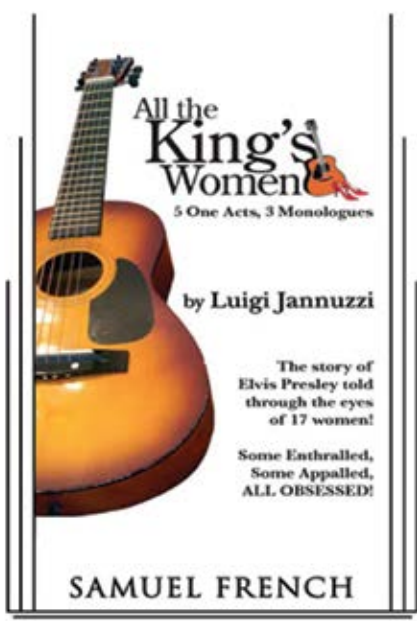
For theatres with a liability-only policy, the coverage can usually be added to their existing policy, and, depending on the company, for an additional premium of as little as \$100, they can purchase coverage for as much as \$15,000 in properties. It is so affordable that it doesn't make sense not to add the coverage, especially when they consider what having the rented property will do to enhance their programming.

**Depending on the company, for an additional premium of as little as \$100, they can purchase coverage for as much as \$15,000 in properties.**

Most importantly, any time that a theatre is considering mounting a production that will surely involve renting theatrical properties, they should request a copy of the rental agreement or contract from the company they intend to rent from, as well as an estimate of the value of the equipment to be rented. This should be done during the planning phase of the upcoming season, rather than while standing at the rental counter waiting to complete the contract.

It is not a difficult proposition to insure those properties for theatres, but it can be very difficult to provide coverage on the spot, unless the theatre already has coverage of their own, and is willing to forego coverage for their own property in favor of meeting the rental agreement's insurance requirements. As with many of my previous articles, the theme of this one is *plan ahead!* Don't get caught without enough insurance and without enough time to get it procured before your production opens. ♦

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# AACT New York Adventure 2016

## Last Chance to Register!



Register online NOW at [aact.org/nyc](http://aact.org/nyc)

See Broadway shows and explore exciting New York. Experience Manhattan's Times Square with your community theatre friends and AACT family. Make a highlight of your summer of 2016 by joining AACT at this great adventure July 7-10, 2016. Come early or stay late (with a great hotel rate!) and see more of all that NYC has to offer.

The Millennium Broadway Hotel New York will be the host hotel and is in the heart of New York City. Located in Times Square, the Millennium Broadway offers convenient access to Broadway theatres and Fifth Avenue shopping.

Registration includes three nights hotel, two Broadway Shows, AACT Saturday dinner at Sardi's, Specialty Tours, and more.

Registration includes three nights, but if you want to come in early or stay to see more shows or do some exploring, you can add nights at the Millennium for only \$250 per room, per night. And if you book extra nights through AACT you won't pay taxes on your room!

The AACT New York Adventure includes exciting events -

**Meet & Greet Reception at Sardi's** sponsored by **Samuel French**

**Times Square Tour** sponsored by **Arts People**

**Afterglow Reception** for adults and youth sponsored by **Steele**

**Spring Stage Rights**, at O'Lunney's Irish Pub, Times Square

**Two Broadway Shows**

✽ One can be **Disney's Aladdin** at the New Amsterdam Theatre with a Pre-Show Reception (Q&A from Disney's Aladdin creative team) sponsored by **Disney Theatrical Group** and **MTI**.

*A limited number of tickets have been secured for Disney's Aladdin. These tickets are going fast! Register now to secure your ticket.*

**Dinner at Sardi's**

**AACT Youth Summit**

**Millennium Broadway Hotel** Three nights

Visit [aact.org/nyc](http://aact.org/nyc) to see the schedule for the AACT New York Adventure 2016

## Sponsors for New York Adventure 2016



Sponsor an event at this great adventure! For details contact Jill Patchin at [jill@aact.org](mailto:jill@aact.org).

**Disney's Aladdin** and the special pre-show reception with *Disney's Aladdin* creative team will be a highlight of the AACT New York Adventure 2016. Registration includes two Broadway shows. Broadway shows will depend on availability. AACT has a list of recommended shows that are currently running on Broadway at [aact.org/nyc](http://aact.org/nyc).

Other shows for your consideration that should be available in July:

**Fiddler On The Roof** – a wonderful re-imagined revival of this beloved musical

**On Your Feet** – a Latino fused musical based on the inspiring story of Emilio and Gloria Estefan's amazing rise to superstardom

**Shuffle Along or The Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and all that followed** – a new musical written and directed by George Wolfe offering an inside look at the making of Broadway's first all-black musical

**The King And I** – Bartlett Sher's thrilling new production of Rogers and Hammerstein's classic musical



The lobby at the Millennium Broadway Hotel

**Fun/Home** – the 2015 Tony winning musical based on the graphic novel about a young lesbian and the relationship with her closeted father

**The Crucible** – Arthur Miller's classic drama in an exciting new production conceived and directed by Ivo van Hove

**School Of Rock** – hit musical based on the cult film with new music by Andrew Lloyd Webber (*Phantom of the Opera*) and book by Julian Fellowes (*Downton Abbey*), it follows fourteen delightful fifth-graders as they morph into a rock band

Visit [aact.org/nyc](http://aact.org/nyc) for more Broadway show recommendations.





# AACT Youth Summit



The AACT New York Adventure 2016 includes the AACT Youth Summit for ages 9 - 18. In addition to the three nights at the Millennium Broadway Hotel, two Broadway shows, and the special Saturday dinner at Sardi's, the Youth Summit will also have several special events including :

- An exciting theatre studio workshop featuring New York Theatre Professionals
- Q&A with Maryann Cocca-Leffler, writer of *Princess K.I.M. The Musical*, sponsored by **Steele Spring Stage Rights**
- Broadway shows
- Connecting with theatre youth from across the country

There must be one adult chaperone for every ten youth summit members.

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# AACT NewPlayFest



The AACT NewPlayFest world premiere of **Laguna Beach, Ohio** by Malcolm MacDonald opened March 25 at Stage Right Productions/2<sup>nd</sup> Street Theater in Bend, Oregon. The production ran through April 9.

Playwright Malcolm MacDonald stated, "When I first got the news from AACT that my play was one of the AACT NewPlayFest winners, I was honored and thrilled. But then I started getting a little worried that some community theatre in Bend, Oregon was

NewPlayFest winners. Of the opening of *Laguna Beach, Ohio* she said, "What an exciting weekend for our theater and the Central Oregon theater community as a whole! I could not have been prouder of our talented team. We put energetic effort into every production at 2nd Street Theater, but it was great to actually receive national recognition. We enjoyed having the out of town guests for opening night, not to mention how grateful we were to have received a \$4000 grant from the Ayre Theatre Foundation for participating in NewPlayFest. Working with playwright Malcolm MacDonald was a fun and enlightening experience. I highly recommend other theaters to participate in the AACT NewPlayFest. The discoveries, the challenges and the rewards are worth the risk."

Opening next for AACT NewPlayFest will be the world premiere of **Wash, Dry, Fold** by Nedra Pezold Roberts at Chicago Street Theatre/Community Theatre Guild, Valparaiso, Indiana on May 20. The production will run through June 4. Tickets can be reserved at [chicagostreet.org](http://chicagostreet.org)

*Wash, Dry, Fold* tells the story of sisters Trudy and Enola, who have been bickering all their lives, over differences in religion, lifestyle, and childhood resentments. Now they are stuck with each other trying to salvage Grace's Place, the run down laundromat they inherited from their mother. And there are other problems. Uncle Slackjaw, a Vietnam P.O.W., slips in and out

of reality as often as he wanders in and out of the laundromat. The bank has turned Enola down for a loan, and Officer Baby Face is threatening to lock up Uncle Slack as a public nuisance. The arrival of Arlene—a 28-year-old, over-qualified tattoo artist—into their working-class neighborhood brings the possibility of change. But her offer of a desperately needed loan does more than give Enola and Trudy a shot at saving Grace's Place. It gives them the potential to unlock their cages of torment, especially the torment of their own guilt.

The 2016 AACT NewPlayFest calendar also includes

**Gracefully Ending** by Anthony DeLauder  
Theatre Arlington, Arlington, TX  
July 1 – 17  
[theatrearlington.org](http://theatrearlington.org)



Opening Night of the AACT NewPlayFest World Premiere of *Laguna Beach, Ohio* by Malcolm MacDonald  
Stage Right Productions/2<sup>nd</sup> Street Theater, Bend, Oregon

Front row (l-r): Jack K. Ayre & Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation representative Linda M. Lee, Technical Assistant Jake Fischer, (on sofa, cast) Patricia West-Del Ruth, Jim Wurm, Shane Ketterman, Kate Andrews, Fred Giacomini, CW Wurm  
Back Row (l-r): Director Rick Jenkins, Assistant Director/Production Designer Kelley Ryan, Set Designer Gary Loddio, Playwright Malcolm MacDonald, AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford, Stage Manager Lori Lampe, Running Crew Raechel Gilland, Set Designer/Painter Suzan Noyes, Technical Director Shaun Limbocker, Stage Right Productions Managing Director Sandy Klein

going to produce it. Who are they? Where is Bend, Oregon? It soon became clear that the director, Rick Jenkins, really understood and loved *Laguna Beach, Ohio* so I knew my play was in good hands. My play was very fortunate to have ended up with the talented, perfect cast that Stage Right Productions assembled. I was so impressed with everyone involved with the production, and the strong support from the audience. Opening night was wonderful and was sold out, and the audience laughed, gasped, and related to the characters more than I anticipated. The whole production was more than I expected, and the process was so filled with love and intelligence and professionalism. It really was a highlight for me as a playwright."

Managing Director of Stage Right Productions Sandy Klein was beyond thrilled and honored to be producing one of the AACT



**The Emperor of North America** by Thomas Hischak  
Silver Spring Stage, Silver Spring, MD  
September 16 – October 1  
ssstage.org

**Shades of Valor** by Karen L. Lewis  
Twin City Stage, Winston-Salem, NC  
October 28 – 30, 2016  
twincitystage.org

**Get Out of Dodge** by Jeanne Drennan  
Venice Theatre, Venice, FL  
November 3 – 20  
venicestage.com

2015, and continued with the world premiere production of *Laguna Beach, Ohio* by Malcolm MacDonald at Stage Right Productions/2<sup>nd</sup> Street Theatre in Bend, Oregon March 25 – April 9, 2016.

The seven AACT NewPlayFest 2016 scripts will be published by Dramatic Publishing Company in an anthology and Dramatic is licensing production rights for the plays, a big boost to the launch of any new script! The six plays from the inaugural AACT NewPlayFest are available in an anthology from Dramatic Publishing: [dramaticpublishing.com/p3742/American-Association-of-Community-Theatre-AACT-NewPlayFest-Winning-Plays:-Volume-1-\(2014\)/product\\_info.html](http://dramaticpublishing.com/p3742/American-Association-of-Community-Theatre-AACT-NewPlayFest-Winning-Plays:-Volume-1-(2014)/product_info.html).

## Call for Reviewers for AACT NewPlayFest 2018

Join AACT NewPlayFest by reviewing original new plays. AACT is seeking individuals to volunteer to read and score scripts. New for the 2018 cycle, the scripts will first go through an elimination round conducted by a select group of Reviewers. In the next round three Reviewers will evaluate each script. Their scores will determine the scripts that advance to the semi-final round. Apply now to be a Reviewer! Application forms for Reviewers are available at [aact.org/newplayfest](http://aact.org/newplayfest).

## Submit a Script for AACT NewPlayFest 2018

Scripts must be submitted between August 1 and September 30. Non-musical, full-length plays only. Scripts must be unpublished and must not have received a full production. (If selected, the AACT theatre's production is to be a world premiere.) Only one script per playwright accepted. No fees required for AACT member playwrights, \$10 script processing fee for non-members. For more information and script formatting guidelines visit [aact.org/newplayfest](http://aact.org/newplayfest)

**New plays are exciting! Participate in AACTNewPlayFest 2018! ♦**



Dramatic Publishing representative Carrie Granatelli, AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford, and Playwright Malcolm MacDonald at the opening of *Laguna Beach*, Ohio

The 2016 AACT NewPlayFest cycle began with the world premiere production of *Lighthouse* by William Baer at the Windsor [Colorado] Community Playhouse September 25 – October 10,

Three musicals to help you celebrate the holidays!

A simple piece of cloth becomes the basis for a true Christmas miracle.

**the Christmas Tablecloth**

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# AACT Urges Support of the Arts

If you are reading this you know how the arts enrich your life. Do you share with others how arts have impacted your life? Do you communicate how your theatre and other arts improve your community? Do you advocate for support of the arts?

In March, AACT joined Americans for the Arts and other national associations as a National Partner of Arts Advocacy Day. AACT's Executive Director, Julie Crawford was in Washington, DC with over 500 arts advocates. They spent two days reviewing and learning about the issues and visiting legislators' offices, where they shared personal stories about the importance of the arts, and facts and figures that justify support of the arts.

The event concluded with a Whitehouse Briefing delving deeper into some of the arts projects that are impacting lives, such as a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the hospital at Walter Reed Bethesda that is helping soldiers cope with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Arts Advocates also attended the annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy, this year delivered by John Maeda, American designer, technologist, and catalyst behind the movement to transform STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education to STEAM by including the Arts.

One of the successes of the past year was the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which includes Art as a part of a "well-rounded education." Arts advocates urged national legislators to provide the oversight needed to be sure ESSA is enacted to benefit Every Student on the state and local levels.



Left photo, Texans for the Arts Executive Director Ann S. Graham and AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford at the Nation's Capitol on Arts Advocacy Day 2016.



Right photo, AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford and Chief Counsel of Government and Public Affairs at Americans for the Arts & Executive Director of the American for the Arts Action Fund Nina Ozlu Tunceli at the White House Briefing on Arts Advocacy Day, March 8, 2016

Published for Arts Advocacy Day, but a resource for the entire year, is the *2016 Congressional Arts Handbook*. It includes a section on facts and figures you can use when you advocate for the arts whether with your neighbor, city council, funders, or legislators. There are also sections on the arts issues and arts support records of legislators. A copy was delivered to each U.S. Senator and Representative prior to Arts Advocacy Day. You can download a copy at [AmericansForTheArts.org/AAD/Handbook](http://AmericansForTheArts.org/AAD/Handbook).

Your theatre depends on your support as a volunteer or patron, but also on the support of your community. Community support is bolstered by state and national government recognition of the importance of the arts. National arts issues impact your theatre and your theatre's future in many ways. AACT urges you to communicate your support of the arts with policy makers on all levels. ♦

## Top Ten Reasons to Support the Arts

### 1. Arts promote true prosperity.

The Arts help us express our values, build bridges between cultures, and bring us together.

### 2. Arts improve academic performance.

Students with four years of arts or music in high school average 100 points higher on the verbal and math portions of their SATs than students with just one-half year of arts or music.

### 3. Arts strengthen the economy.

The arts and culture sector is a \$699 billion industry, 4.3 % of the nation's GDP.

### 4. Arts are good for local merchants.

Attendees at nonprofit arts events spend \$24.60 per person per event, beyond the cost of admission on items such as meals, parking, and babysitters.

### 5. Arts drive tourism.

Arts travelers are ideal tourists, staying longer and spending more to seek out authentic cultural experiences.

### 6. Arts are an export industry.

U.S. exports of arts goods grew to \$75 billion in 2012, while imports were just \$27 billion – a \$47 billion arts trade surplus.

### 7. Arts spark creativity and innovation.

Creativity is among the top five applied skills sought by business leaders when hiring. The arts provide skills sought by employers.

### 8. Arts have social impact.

A high concentration of arts in a city leads to higher civic engagement, more social cohesion, higher child welfare, and lower crime and poverty rates.

### 9. Arts improve healthcare.

Health care institutions provide arts programming because of their healing benefits to patients – shorter hospital stays, better pain management, and less medication.

### 10. Arts mean business.

Businesses in the U.S. involved in the creation or distribution of the arts employ 2.9 million people, representing 3.9% of all businesses and 1.9% of all employees.

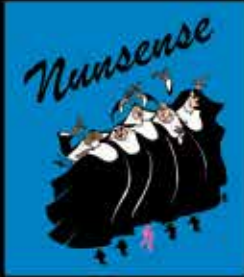
– excerpted from the *2016 Congressional Arts Handbook*. For full text download at [AmericansForTheArts.org/AAD/Handbook](http://AmericansForTheArts.org/AAD/Handbook).



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## Nunsense

Winner of four Outer Critics Circle Awards including BEST MUSICAL! -- Variety



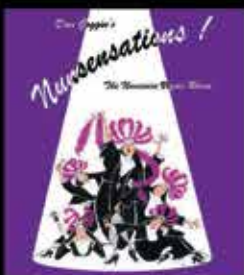
## Nunsense 2

NUNSENSE 2 schtick even better. -- Chicago Tribune



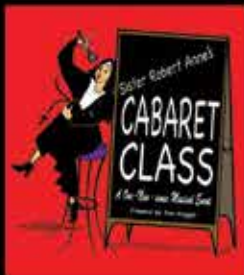
## Nunsense Jamboree

NUNSENSE JAMBOREE is thunderously successful! -- DramaLogue



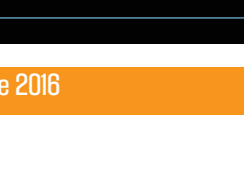
## Nuncrackers

NUNCRACKERS is immensely entertaining. It doesn't get any better than this! -- CBS Radio



## Meshuggah-Nuns!

MESHUGGAH-NUNS will knock your socks off! -- Minneapolis Star Tribune



## Nunsense A-men!

NUNSENSE A-MEN! is a hit of the first order! -- USA Today



## Nunsensations!

NUNSENSATIONS is zany, witty, daffy, and unusually poignant! -- St. Paul Pioneer Press



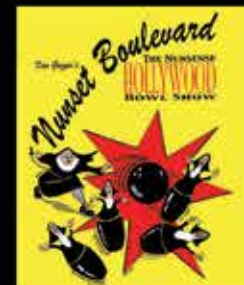
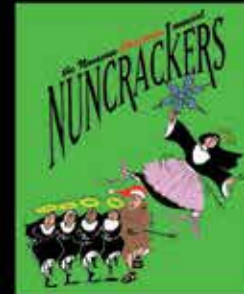
## Nunset Boulevard

NUNSET BOULEVARD is heavenly, hilarious, wacky and unpredictable! -- ABC Television



## Sr. Robert Anne's Cabaret Class

SISTER ROBERT ANNE'S CABARET CLASS is a fabulous night of musical theatre! -- BroadwayWorld





# Nunsense



## Nunsense A-Men



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### *Nunsense 2: The Mega-Musical*

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- Tams-Witmark



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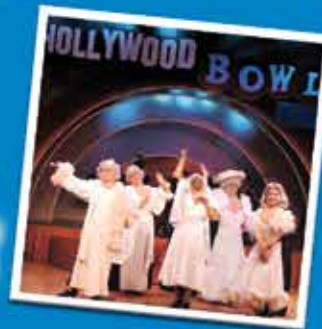
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# AACTFest 2017 in Rochester, Minnesota

AACTFest 2017 will culminate in a national community theatre festival to be held June 26-July 1, 2017 in Rochester, Minnesota.

Workshops and meetings will be in the Mayo Civic Center, with performances in the Rochester Civic Theatre, also located in the Civic Center complex.



The Center's downtown location offers visitors easy access to hotels, restaurants, shopping and entertainment—whether they take the street, skyway, or underground climate controlled walkway. Home of world-famous Mayo Clinic, Rochester is the state's third-largest city, with a population of 110,000 friendly Midwesterners. Explore the charm and beauty of Rochester, visit [rochestercvb.org](http://rochestercvb.org).

Leading up to the excitement of the national festival are approximately 40 state festivals with more than 200 theatre productions, followed by nearly 60 theatre companies performing in regional festivals.

Productions advance from the state festivals to their regional festival, all of which will be completed by the first weekend of May, 2017.

The national festival will feature 12 productions that have received top honors in their respective state and regional festivals. All participating theatre companies adhere to a common set of rules documented in the *AACTFest 2017 Handbook* (available at [aact.org/handbook](http://aact.org/handbook)).

The AACTFest 2017 national festival also includes a theatre management conference, educational workshops, top vendor displays, social events, sightseeing, and networking opportunities, all ending with a festival awards presentation.

AACTFest is an exciting process, involving community theatres in every corner of the country, and on military bases in Europe. Plan to join this invigorating theatre event by entering your state festival and start on the road to the national festival—or mark your calendar and attend this great celebration of American community theatre! ♦

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# Honor Special Contributions With the AACT Spotlight Award

Do you know someone who has made a significant impact to the quality of your local theatre? Do you know an organization that continues to participate in and make important contributions to your success? Do you know a person or an organization that is dedicated to your mission, a high achiever that assists you in building a stronger community?

Partner with AACT to recognize their special contributions with an AACT Spotlight Award.



Any AACT member theatre may apply to present the Spotlight Award. Member theatres across the nation can nominate any individual, organization, or company. Spotlight Award applications may be submitted anytime, and awards may be presented at any time during the year. The nomination form is available at [www.aact.org/awards](http://www.aact.org/awards)

The AACT Spotlight Award must be confirmed by the AACT Awards Committee, but the criteria are very broad. It is designed to help AACT organizational members pay tribute to an individual or organization for long or special service. The Spotlight Award should not replace any acknowledgement the theatre might otherwise make, nor should it be simply for last season's acting or technical work or out-front activities. It should recognize outstanding dedication, service, or contribution to your theatre by a volunteer, staff person, or supporter. It is for that special person, business, or group whose contributions have made a significant impact on the quality of your theatre.

AACT will provide a certificate and will attempt to send a presenter, if desired. The award can be presented any time. In addition, AACT will list recipients in *Spotlight* and on the AACT website. Further details are available online at [aact.org/spotlight-award](http://aact.org/spotlight-award) or through the AACT office. ♦

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# Board and Volunteers Celebrate and Move AACT Forward

By Julie Crawford, Executive Director

AACT volunteers and staff celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AACT's founding while gathered in late February in San Antonio, Texas for the 2016 AACT Winter Meetings. A champagne and cake reception was held at The Playhouse San Antonio, after which, many in the AACT group attended a performance of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. AACT was founded in January 1986.

training and reviewed the changes in the *AACTFest Handbook* for the 2017 cycle. Region Reps discussed tools to make them more effective. Volunteer Teams pulled together plans to facilitate AACT communications and membership engagement, and others tightened up activities for the NY Adventure.

The AACT Board received numerous reports, including the final report from the S.W.O.T. Task Force, and approved a recommendation from the Endowment Restructure Task Force to explore protecting the endowment funds via a separate 501(c)(3) organization and receiving proposals from community foundations.

Committees and the Board discussed membership fees, board structure, festivals in the future, activities for youth in AACT, and many other topics. President Murray Chase appointed board members to continue discussion of some topics in small groups and bring ideas and suggestions to the Summer Meetings in July at the NY Adventure.

AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds arrived in San Antonio a day early to visit local theatres. He was welcomed warmly, visiting ten theatres while in the area.

The weather in San Antonio was warm in February. As President Chase observed, warmer than at his theatre in Florida! A fun time was had by the AACT group dining and networking on the San Antonio Riverwalk. ♦

*A special reception celebrating AACT's 30 years was held at the Playhouse San Antonio prior to a performance of Jesus Christ Superstar. AACT President Murray Chase and AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford celebrate with many AACT members with a special AACT 30th anniversary cake.*

The annual Winter Meetings event is held so the AACT Board, committees, and other volunteer groups can meet, generate ideas, plan, and build relationships that will facilitate their work in the months ahead.

This year the event wasn't just meetings. It was kicked off with a guest presentation on "Generational Differences and Reaching Out to Younger Members." A panel from the San Antonio Chapter of Associated General Contractors (AGC) shared their experiences in this area. Led by Executive Vice President Doug McMurtry, the panel also included two AGC Board members, Hilda Ochoa and Blaine Beckman. Both are active in AGC's young professionals' organization, the Construction Leadership Forum. Both participated in theatre while in high school and used that experience to help them relate to the AACT audience. Part of the presentation was a clever skit illustrating how younger volunteers and employees may perceive organizations differently from their older peers.

In two and a half days of meetings, 14 AACT groups, in addition to the Board, met. Plus there were several meetings of subgroups of the Education Committee. Festival Commissioners received



*Texas Nonprofit Theatres Executive Director and AACT Past President Linda M. Lee, The Playhouse San Antonio Interim President and CEO Mia Migliaccio, AACT Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds during the reception.*



# AACT 2016 TEAM Conference

**August 19-21, 2016**  
**Des Moines, Iowa**

AACT is offering an expanded educational conference this year, with four tracks focusing on theatre education programs, artistic direction of a theatre, development and marketing, and technical theatre.

Come as a Team! The four tracks will be held simultaneously so participants from the same, or nearby, theatres can share rides and rooms.

The insights you gain will pay for the conference registration many, many times over.



and add to the topics list prior to the conference, so the agenda will address your biggest concerns.

## Technical Theatre Skills

The Technical Theatre Skills track is for those who work behind the scenes. Learn hands-on from a team of professionals from Des Moines Community Playhouse. Costume Design/Construction, Makeup, Scenic Design/Construction, Sound, and Lighting will all be covered. You will find resources and supplies you can utilize in your theatre, increase your excitement in the magic of technical theatre, and connect with a nationwide network of fellow techies!

*No technical theatre training is required; even experienced techies will benefit.*

The AACT 2016 TEAM Conference is hosted by Des Moines Community Playhouse.

Register and more information at [aact.org/team](http://aact.org/team)  
Or contact the AACT office 817-732-3177 or [info@aact.org](mailto:info@aact.org).

The fee and the schedule are the same for each of the four tracks. Discounts on registration, hotel, and airfare. Information at [aact.org/team](http://aact.org/team). ♦

## Educational Programing Directors

Boost your theatre's education program, exchange ideas and experiences, and learn skills to better manage your programs. Gain skills to tackle theatre education issues, a renewed enthusiasm to build your educational programs, and connections with a network of colleagues from all over the country.

*The Educational Programing Directors track is for anyone, whatever his or her title, who is responsible for their theatre's education program.*

## Directing the Theatre's Artistic Vision

Choose the right plays for your next season; learn solutions for choosing directors, recruiting actors, and solving technical problems; and examine long-range planning. Discover and re-envision exciting ways to produce high quality theatre as you exchange ideas and experiences with fellow producers and artistic directors.

*Directing the Theatre's Artistic Vision track is for anyone, whatever his or her title, who is responsible for the overall artistic direction of their theatre.*

## Development/Marketing Skills

Discover strategies and tactics to increase your fundraising and marketing abilities, and learn ways to create loyalty to your organization and its place in your community. Understand methods for small, medium, and large sized arts groups to enlist donors and sponsors, build audiences, and to use marketing and branding in today's changing social media world.

*The Development/Marketing Skills track is for anyone from board members to staff who raises funds or promotes their theatre.*

The first three tracks will provide learning through a series of intensive, topic specific, round table discussions with participants sharing experiences – both problems and solutions. You will rank

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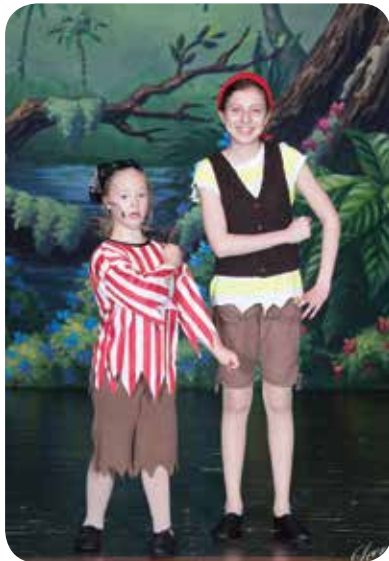


# How To Start A Special Needs Theatre Program At Your Theatre

By Chad-Alan Carr

**T**heatre is for everyone! It is not just for actors and technicians. It is not just for the audience. It is for anyone and everyone who wants to experience the truest expression of life.

We all know that theatre changes lives. It transcends audiences to another place. It is an outlet for artists, actors, musicians, and more to express themselves. But theatre is and can be even more than that for your theatre organization. Why not make your theatre programs accessible to all? Not just for people with special needs/disabilities to be in the audience, but for them to be on stage too. Don't we ALL...every one of us...deserve to appreciate and experience theatre in every way possible? I think we do. I think all of us want our theatres to have that. To be that wonderful, sacred, and safe place for kids, adults, senior citizens, and people of all ages with and without special needs.



Cast members from *The Penguin Project* At Gettysburg Community Theatre's 2014 production of Disney's *Peter Pan Jr.*

Photo courtesy of Cindie Leer.

Leer Photography is the official photographer of Gettysburg Community Theatre.

So there is **WHY** we should start a special needs program.

But what about the **HOW**?

Well, like with most things, the answers are all over the internet. Many articles, many books, and many theatres have already done it. I definitely recommend reaching out to your AACT colleagues to see if they have already tried a special needs theatre program. I know many of us have and it is life changing for the participants, and inspirational to the artists who direct them as well as to the audience who sees their accomplishments in the performance. Yes, it can be scary. How will we do it? Who will come? How will we find the special needs kids to be in the show? Who knows how

to work with them? Who will help us and how much money and resources do we have to put toward this?

All I can say is, the outcome is worth every single reluctant thought. It is worth it. You simply have to take the leap of faith. That being said, if you can partner with a school district's special education division, and/or Easter Seals (or similar organization) that can help you with resources, staff, and even promote your program

to their students, you will have an easier time producing your first year of a special needs theatre program.

**A**t the end of this article is a list of some very good books that can give some insight and ideas to special needs theatre. Having produced only one type of special needs program myself, I can only honestly share my experience with that program and how it changed me and my theatre for the better. The great thing about it however was that it is open to ALL special needs not just limited to Autism or Hearing/Visually Impaired but

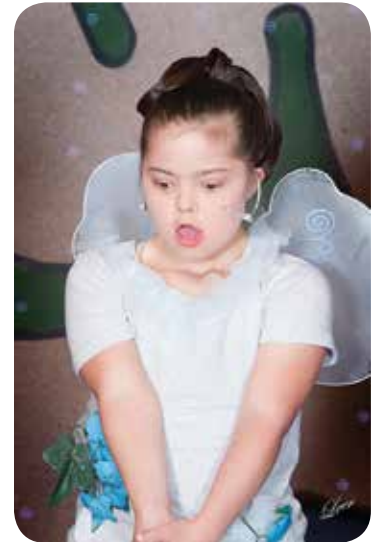
to ALL youth with any kind of special need. The even better thing about it is that it includes youth without special needs too, integrating the children in an educational program together. Something rarely done in schools today. I cannot say enough good things about this program.

The Penguin Project ([PenguinProject.org](http://PenguinProject.org)) is a unique theatre arts program for children with any kind of special need/disability to actually perform all of the roles in a musical production side by side with the guidance and support of a "peer mentor" that is a child of the same age without special needs/disabilities. This pairing while working on a show creates a friendship and true life changing experience for all involved.

There are two parts to this program. 1. The production and 2. The process.

The production can be anything you want, but the Penguin Project Foundation recommends starting with one of the many shows in Music Theatre International's Broadway Junior Collection. You can receive a huge discount on royalties for the production with this special program. MTI will allow you to do the show as many times as you want within one year but only pay for the Showkit and royalty for one performance.

**B**ut it is the **PROCESS** that is the most important in this, and any special needs program. The process is the relationship building that happens between the artist with special needs and the peer mentor without special needs that serves as their buddy/shadow in the show; helping them memorize and say lines, helping them on and off the stage, and getting them to each spot in their blocking and choreography. The bonds formed are truly fulfilling and life changing for both the artist and the mentor.





Imagine being the parent of a child with Cerebral Palsy who spends the majority of his day in a power chair and uses a computer "Dynavox" to communicate because he is non-verbal. Now imagine seeing that child's power chair completely covered in a costume (made of cardboard and pvc pipe) that resembles a crocodile. He smiles as, on cue, he presses the "tick tock" sound effect he uploaded onto his Dynavox and sends his "crocodile" power chair chasing Captain Hook around the stage in Disney's *Peter Pan Jr.* He is THE Croc! His family is seeing him enjoy theatre not from the audience any more but right there on YOUR stage.

That is just one of the many heart-warming success stories that you and your theatre could experience when you start a special needs theatre program. I did and it was incredible to see that boy's spirit brighten the room when he achieved that during rehearsal. He did something many people told his family that he would never be able to do. Theatre did that for him.

By the way, in case you were wondering...The Penguin Project gets its name because penguins are special needs birds...they cannot fly, but they thrive equally as well as any other bird in their own environment. Our Penguins (artists with special needs) may not be able to fly, but their spirits SOAR on stage through the love and joy of theatre arts!

## RESOURCES

### **Special Talents, Special Needs: Drama for People with Learning Disabilities** 1st Edition

by Ian McCurrach and Barbara Darnley

*"A wonderful book to help set up a drama group for those with learning difficulties, to help them express themselves through drama. It is a step by step guide to running a group from the basics of finding the setting right through to the final performance. Covering all topics from creative expression, acting skills, working with others to eye contact and character building. Great encouragement for those who would like to explore drama as a part of a therapeutic learning program."*

Adders.org

*Special Talents, Special Needs* is a handbook for teachers and facilitators working with people with learning disabilities who are interested in creative expression through drama. Based on their considerable experience working with the Strathcona Theatre Company (Europe's leading professional company of actors with learning disabilities), Ian McCurrach and Barbara Darnley have created a step-by-step guide to running a drama group. Beginning with the first steps of finding an appropriate setting and assessing the group, this guide progresses through five parts and thirty different sessions to conclude with the planning of a showing or performance. Each part covers a general topic such as introducing creative expression, exploring theatre skills, and working with people with profound disabilities, while the individual sessions have a diversity of themes from trust and eye contact to building a character. The course may be followed step-by-step or simply used as a foundation upon which to base individual ideas. Although drama workshops of this kind do not provide formal therapy, the authors' experience has repeatedly shown that such work with people with learning disabilities not only increases communication skills but also promotes independence and self-esteem.

### **Wings to Fly: Bringing Theatre Arts to Students**

**With Special Needs** Paperback – March, 1993

by Sally Dorothy Bailey

*Wings To Fly* is a comprehensive nuts and bolts handbook which describes concrete, proven techniques and lesson plans to make drama accessible to people with disabilities of all ages. It is written for use by professionals in education, recreation, theatre, and therapy settings. The book covers creative drama, improvisational acting, puppetry, theatre production, and creating original scripts, providing specific adaptations for each situation as well as issues such as inclusion, using drama to teach academic subjects, physical accessibility, programmatic accessibility, behavior management, and effective team teaching techniques.

### **Acting: for Kids on the Autistic Spectrum**

Paperback – November 29, 2005

by Alisa Wolf

*"This is a 'must have' book for anyone who works with actors, autism or not. Remarkable insights and motivation are on every page, with valuable help for actors, directors and writers. Congratulations on a much-needed addition to every theatrical library."*

Emmy Awarding Winning Producer, Al Burton

*"Alisa Wolf has written a terrific guidebook on how to use acting as an effective and fun therapy for kids on the autistic spectrum. Helpful, clear and thorough, this is an excellent map to aid in anyone's education."*

Award Winning Producer John Landis.

*"In the book, Acting: for Kids on the Autistic Spectrum, the author has come up with yet another wonderful tool in the ongoing struggle to break the bonds this insidious condition has wrapped around our children."*

Tony Award Winning Actor Joe Mantegna

*"What a powerful learning tool for improving the lives of autistic children. It's uplifting for parents to know there's a program out there that will make a difference in their child's life."*

Award Winning Actor John Schneider

Note: These books are listed in AACT's Amazon Store - [aact.org/amazon-store](http://aact.org/amazon-store).

*Special Talents, Special Needs: Drama for People with Learning Disabilities* is available new. *Wings to Fly: Bringing Theatre Arts to Students With Special Needs* and *Acting: for Kids on the Autistic Spectrum* are currently out of print, and available as used copies on Amazon. To purchase from the AACT Bookstore click on "Buy from Amazon." A listing of new and used copies available via vendors in the Amazon Marketplace will display. ♦

*Chad-Alan Carr is the Founding Executive/Artistic Director for Gettysburg [PA] Community Theatre (GCT). With well over 200 educational, community, and professional theatre productions (as director, choreographer or performer) to his name, Chad directed the Eastern States Regional Premiere of The Penguin Project (theatre for youth with special needs) in 2014, and serves on the boards of the Pennsylvania Association of Community Theatres, Eastern States Theatre Association, and AACT. Chad is seeing his life-long dream come true with the opening of the GCT at the old Elks Lodge at 49 York Street in downtown Gettysburg. [GettysburgCommunityTheatre.org](http://GettysburgCommunityTheatre.org)*

# Friends We'll Miss

**Bea Miller**, AACT's 1<sup>st</sup> President. Mama Bea. Queen Bea. She was known by many nicknames, and much loved by all who knew her. To me she was an inspiration, a friend, a boss, a colleague, and most of all, a mentor. I met her at Theatre Memphis (TM) in the early sixties when I was hired to open their first box office. Over the years, she played many roles. In the early years, she even played a role onstage in *The Detective Story*. She held book for Eugart Yerian, the artistic director at TM, then known as Memphis Little Theatre. She went on to become President of both TM and Stage Set, the women's auxiliary during the Sherwood Lohrey years. She served as Business Manager for many years, hiring me again after a break to raise my children. She was at the forefront of building TM's new theatre in 1975, leaving our old home in the former swimming pool of the Pink Palace. All in all, I knew her for over 50 years. During that time, she also served as the first President of AACT, helping to found AACT when the ATA (American Theatre Association) went bankrupt. Kudos to Bea, and the other forward thinking community theatre leaders who had the foresight and the will to make sure that a national organization for community theatre would survive and thrive.

I worked beside Bea in so many capacities. The one I loved the most was when she was an almost permanent volunteer in the box office. She taught me so much as we went from the dark ages of hard ticket sales to computers, and in fact, from pens, pencils, and papers to word processors, and then computers. What a transformation we lived through together.

Bea was also involved with the state association, Tennessee Theatre Association (TTA). She introduced me to TTA as I struggled to network and learn about others involved in the same crazy business we were in. She was involved in Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC), Region 4, introducing me to an even larger network. I was

amazed when I joined the board of AACT many years later, and discovered Bea was still active in committee work as she approached her nineties. At that time, she was an Endowment Trustee. I was even more surprised when I attended her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday at TM, and she was still active on TM's season selection committee. Indomitable doesn't even begin to describe her.



Executive Producer Debbie Litch speaks for the staff, volunteers, and patrons of TM, "Bea was the light that guided Theatre Memphis to the pinnacle and was the biggest supporter of all we did, on and off stage. She was spirited, committed, compassionate, out-spoken, and a leader at every turn. Her love for Theatre Memphis was as large as ours is for her. Her amazing gifts to her community and to this theater specifically are unparalleled. ... Our thanks will never be enough, we hold you, Bea, in the highest esteem and in our hearts forever."

Bea would have been the first to say she was not, in any way, special. How could she say that, when she had met so many wonderful and special friends from all over the country and the world through her involvement and passion for community theatre?

"Rest in peace our Queen Bea. Exit stage left. The curtain will never come down on your presence and your spotlight will forever shine." We are sure Happy Hal, her husband of many years and a legend in his own right, is now happy again.

~ AACT Executive Vice President Carole Ries



**M**y theater company joined AACT as a new theater seeking education, and direction from the experts. I have been in theater for 35 years and every time I attend an AACT function, I am in awe to discover what I don't know.

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# World Theatre Day

World Theatre Day was celebrated March 27, 2016 by the International Theatre Institute (ITI) – World Organization for the Performing Arts



The author of the Message of World Theatre Day 2016 was the Russian stage director Anatoli Vassiliev, an internationally acclaimed theatre director and professor of Russian Theatre. He is the founder of the Moscow Theatre School of Dramatic Arts, and is considered to be the greatest Russian director of his generation.

His message addresses some basic questions: Do we need theatre?, What do we need it for?, What is it to us?, and What is it able to tell us? In a response to his last question, he states, "Everything! Theatre can tell us everything." The message is brief, and powerful. He stimulates the need of many different kinds of theatre, and encourages all to not miss a chance to participate in theatre.

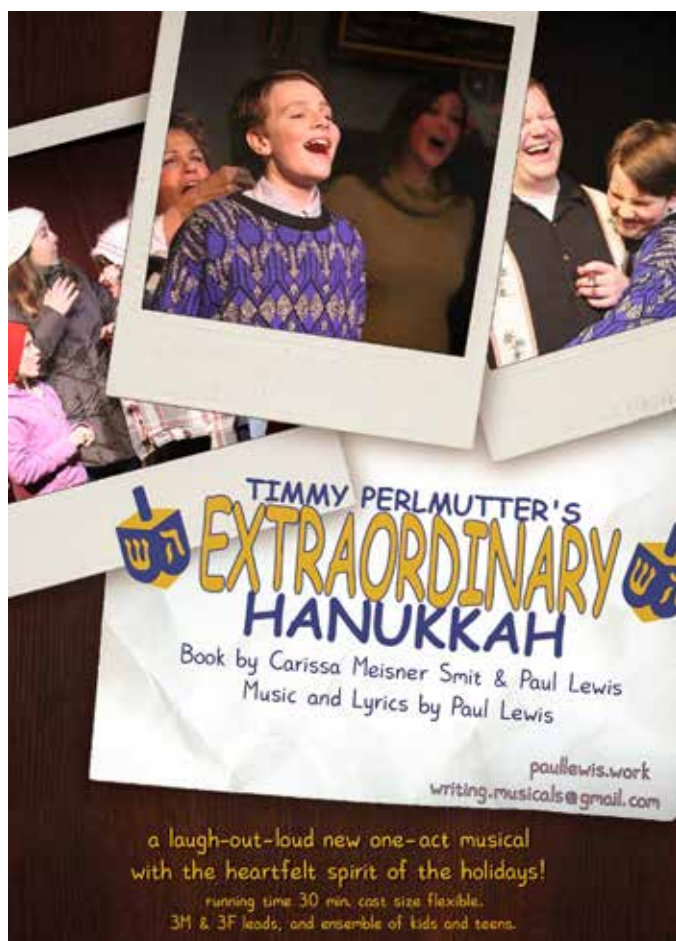
View the complete World Theatre 2016 message at [world-theatre-day.org](http://world-theatre-day.org). ♦

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Please consider including American Association of Community Theatre in your legacy plans through a will, trust, life insurance gift, or other legacy gift. Through these special gifts, friends like you are able to sustain AACT's mission and provide learning experiences for AACT member companies participating in the AACTFest national festivals.

To learn more about legacy planning, visit [aact.org/legacy](http://aact.org/legacy)

Please contact Julie Crawford, AACT Executive Director, for more information at 866-OurAACT (687-2228) or [julie@aact.org](mailto:julie@aact.org)



## Austin Lamirand Joins AACT Staff



Austin Lamirand, AACT Bookkeeper, is a senior at Texas Christian University (TCU) in Fort Worth, Texas. He is scheduled to graduate in December 2016 with a Bachelor of Science in Economics with a minor in Accounting. He is an avid Horned Frog fan and has been a cheerleader all four years while at TCU.

Originally from Decatur, Texas, he enjoys traveling. He will participate in the TCU Study Abroad program this summer in Peru. After completing his bachelor's degree, he plans to pursue a master's degree in Accounting at TCU. ♦





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## What's Trending: Boards

By Julie Crawford, AACT Executive Director

Trends can help you understand what is happening or assist you in preparing before a trend impacts your theatre.

**Boards** was the subject of a Trends survey distributed in early March. Responses were received from 204 theatres in 42 states and a theatre in Rosarito, Baja California, Mexico.

The majority of those completing the survey, 64.2%, were Board members with 37.7% of them being the President. A top staff person (Managing Director, Executive Director, etc.) completed 29.4% of the surveys. Unlike some of the earlier Trends surveys, this one seems to have attracted responses from more small theatres.

**T**he size of theatre Boards varied from three to 55, with 12 being the average (and the median) size Board. That size has been stable for 57.8% of theatres during the past three years. The other 42% were evenly divided between those that have increased the size and those that have decreased the size.

### Theatres reported more female than male board members.

Board terms run from one year to a maximum of six years, with three the average term length. This has not changed during the past three years for most (92.6%) of theatres reporting. About half (51.5%) do not have term limits; Board members can serve an unlimited number of terms. A max of two consecutive terms in the same position is the rule for 31.4%. Term limits have not changed in the past three years for 88.2% of those responding. However, 7.4% have added term limits and 2.9% are thinking of adding them.

Monthly meetings is the norm for 83.8% of theatres responding, with 7.8% meeting only six times a year and 3.9% meeting quarterly. 65.2% have Board attendance policies. Missing three meetings can result in dismissal from the Board in 36.8% of theatres; it's two meetings for 15.7% of theatres. It seems to be working, as 68.1% have no trouble getting a quorum for their meetings; 27.9% said they sometimes do. Proxies are not allowed by 67.6%; 26.5% do allow proxies.

Requirements for Board members, other than attendance, are pretty loose. There is no giving policy for serving on 66.7% of Boards, while 27.5% require a minimum contribution of \$1-1500, for an average minimum gift of \$132. Spotlights Theatre in Baltimore, Maryland is one with a giving policy, "Board members are required to contribute a set dollar amount, but an amount that is significant for the individual."

Half the theatres do not require Board members to purchase season tickets and 60.8% do not require Board members purchase gala or other event tickets, but 49.5% do require Board members maintain membership with the theatre.

Board members are required to serve on committees in 73% of theatres. Only 29.9% require Board orientation; 58.4% report they do not offer a Board orientation session. Only 26% require Board members to sign a written Board member commitment; 30.4% of Boards annually review themselves and/or individual Board members.

The backgrounds of Board members vary from one Board to another. Most of those who responded to the survey (88.7%) include Production Volunteers among the Board members. The Port Angeles Community Players in Washington explained, "Our board, for better or worse, is a working board. Each of us, in ways that have nothing to do with board duties are the workers who get the play on the stage." Other categories of Board members, by percent of theatres reporting:

- 76.0% Local Business men/women
- 57.4% Patrons
- 52.9% Volunteers not involved in productions
- 31.4% Production Representative(s)
- 16.7% Arts council, city, school, or other group representative(s)
- 11.8% Youth Representative
- 2.9% Guild Representative

Union County Playmakers in Monroe, North Carolina, and a couple other theatres wrote in Teachers, and two youth theatres - New Britain Youth Theater in Connecticut and Gibson County Youth Theatre in Princeton, Indiana have Parents on their Boards. Marblehead Little Theatre in Massachusetts wrote in that its Board includes Retired Persons.

**T**heatres reported more female than male Board members, with that becoming more pronounced in the past three years. 40.2% of Boards had more females three years ago, compared to 45.6% now. 22.5% had more males three years ago compared to 13.7% now. The median age of Board members has stayed the same for the past three years for 50.5% of theatres. However, 31.4% report the median age of their Boards has gotten younger.

White is the dominant racial/ethnic group for 99.5% of theatres, with one theatre reporting it to be Asian. Theatres reporting minorities on their Boards:

- 17.6% have some Black Board members
- 13.2% Hispanic
- 5.4% Asian
- 3.4% American Indian/Alaskan native
- 2.5% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 7.4% Multi-racial

The percent of minority Board members has increased for 12.3% of theatres in the past three years, but has stayed the same for 80.9% of theatres. Theatre Baton Rouge noted, "We are also concerned about not representing our community in terms of ethnicity. Something we haven't strategically tackled."



Boards are engaged in many activities of the theatre; quite a few survey respondents reported the Board is involved in "everything" or characterized themselves as "working" boards. "Our board members do everything to promote and do all things for the theatre," reported Little Actor's Theatre of Valdosta, Inc. in Georgia. A couple did admit that not all Board members participate fully; a theatre in Oregon noted a major activity of its Board is, "Complaining."

## Requirements for Board members, other than attendance, are pretty loose.

Boards involved in some of the major tasks of running a theatre:

90.2% of Boards are involved in Fundraising/development

84.8% Strategic/long range planning

82.8% Season selection or approval

82.4% Budgeting

79.9% Community relations

78.4% Marketing/promotions

60.3% Ticket sales

57.4% Staging productions

54.9% Membership solicitation

4.4% wrote in Building maintenance and/or planning for facilities

Three theatres wrote in succession planning. The Neshaminy Valley Music Theatre in Langhorne, Pennsylvania shared, "Over the last three years our board has been making a concentrated effort in

the area of succession planning, specifically to recruit and mentor younger members to our board who might take over leadership." Also mentioned were capital campaigns, education, top staff hiring and reviews, legal compliance, nominating, and Venice Theatre in Florida wrote in, "Friend-raising, Development. Development. Development."

**W**eathervane Playhouse in Akron, Ohio pointed out that its Board "functions overall as a governing Board rather than an operating Board. Fund raising and oversight of financial and volunteer resources are priorities." Several theatres noted restructuring efforts. A few shared that Board members can be hard to find. Rochester's Black Sheep Theatre in New York said, "We have the hardest time actually finding new Board members." Lemon Bay Playhouse, Inc. of Englewood, Florida realizes, "We have a working board, ie: every member has a job or function within the theater that they perform. This being the case, our board members must be very familiar with theater production, staging, play selection, and more. It is hard to find people with this expertise." ♦

**Next up in "What's Trending"** is Lighting. Is your theatre saving energy costs by using LED instruments? Do you provide training for your light board operators? Check it out in the July-August issue of *Spotlight*.

To participate in "Trending" surveys, be sure your theatre contact's email is in the AACT database. Check your record online or contact the AACT office.

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# Dan Castle and Mears Insurance Agency Licenses Revoked

The State of Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services recently sent AACT notification that Daniel Castle's and the Mears Insurance Agency's insurance producer licenses have been revoked. They are no longer licensed to sell insurance in their home state of Michigan, which means their licenses in other states are also void.

This action was taken due to complaints from groups that paid for insurance, but later found they were not covered. It appears premiums paid to Castle/Mears were not forwarded to the insurance carriers.

If your theatre paid Castle/Mears for coverage, it is important that you contact the insurance carrier listed on your policy or insurance certificate to confirm your coverage. If you are not covered, you will need to take action to get coverage.

Unfortunately, the state of Michigan cannot help you recover your lost premiums. You need to contact your local police department to file a report.

Dan Castle and his previous agency handled the AACT Insurance Program until he withdrew from the program in 2003. There has been no connection between him and AACT since then.

The current AACT Insurance Program Manager, Ken Roberts with USI Southwest, can assist you in shopping your insurance needs. Contact him at [kenneth.roberts@usi.biz](mailto:kenneth.roberts@usi.biz) or 800-749-5646. You can read more about the AACT Insurance Program at [aact.org/insurance-program](http://aact.org/insurance-program). ♦

## Artie's Advocacy Tip



Casual conversations with the movers and shakers in your community may help to open doors. You may be surprised that you share common interests that will establish a strong working relationship.

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# AACT Announces National Awards 2016

AACT is proud to recognize the 2016 recipients of AACT National Awards, which will be presented in July, during the AACT New York Adventure 2016.

## Art Cole Lifetime of Leadership Award

*Honors a lifetime of leadership in community theatre by members of AACT who have provided leadership at the national level, in addition to local and/or regional levels.*



### Ginger Heath

(Monroe, North Carolina) has had a life-long devotion to community theatre for more than five decades. Through the years, she has been a perennial leader, mentor, and inspiration to the Union County Playmakers and Metrolina Theatre Association (MTA). Ginger is Founding Chair of the Union County Players in Monroe, Past President of the North Carolina Theatre Conference (NCTC), and Chair of FACTFest and AACTFest for many years. She also served as NCTC Convention Chair and Southeastern Theatre Conference Community Theatre Division Chair, as well as on many committees. Ginger is Founding Chair of MTA, where she currently serves as Treasurer. Nationally, Ginger was co-chair of the 2007 National AACTFest in Charlotte, North Carolina, and served AACT as VP of Marketing and Region IV Representative, as well as on the Festival Commission, Playwright Services Task Force (that created AACT NewPlayFest), as an Endowment Trustee, and North Carolina State Contact. She was honored locally with the HeArt of the Arts Lifetime Achievement Award, and as MTA Theatre Person of the Year. NCTC honored her leadership with the Herman Middleton Award, and AACT recognized her previously with the David C. Bryant Outstanding Service Award. Ginger currently serves as President of the Union County Playmakers.

## Diamond Crown Organization Award

*Recognizes longevity and vitality of AACT member theatres that have expanded programming and/or facilities in the past 10 years, and have the administrative leadership to remain vital to their communities for the next 10 years. Recipients must have been in continuous operation for 75 years and organizational members of AACT for the past 10 years.*



### Bellingham Theatre Guild

(Bellingham, Washington) is an all-volunteer organization founded in 1929 and incorporated in 1932. After meeting initially at the Normal School in Bellingham, in church halls, and a mortuary, the group purchased its current theatre, a former church, in 1944. The Guild is now in the public phase of a capital fundraising campaign and has already received donations and pledges of \$580,000, more than

half the total cost of planned improvements. The group has initiated new ways to encourage younger members to engage with the Guild through Behind-the-Curtains tours and a One Act Theatre Festival. Current members of the Guild continue to recognize and honor the

forward-thinking planning done by their predecessors. They have made changes to the structure of the Guild, embraced technology, planned for building improvements, and moved toward making annual giving a habit. With these changes, they have resolved to pass on a vibrant, sustainable, and innovative Guild to future generations.

## Twink Lynch Organizational Achievement Award

*Recognizes AACT member theatres for successfully completing major steps in new directions, expanding services to their community, or moving to the next level of organizational development.*



### Lincoln Community Playhouse

(Lincoln, Nebraska), an integral part of the arts community since 1946, had fallen into seemingly insurmountable debt. Donors and patrons had abandoned the theatre, and after 64 years, Lincoln Community Playhouse (LCP) was on the brink of closure. During a town hall-style meeting, concerns were voiced: lack of transparency and leadership, poor productions, no community outreach, a failing facility, and an alienated donor, volunteer, and patron base. An action plan was created to move the Playhouse forward, with a key component being selection of a new Executive Director. In November 2009, Morrie Enders was hired. He quickly established credibility and confidence among major foundations, donors and patrons. As a result, the theatre closed its fiscal year with a net of over \$90,000, ending in the black for the first time in 10 years. Over the next three years, \$100,000 in debt and several bank loans were eliminated. The quality of LCP's theatrical productions is now recognized as among the best in the region, and outreach programs have transformed many disenfranchised constituencies in the community. Lincoln Community Playhouse has not only survived near-closure, it has seen an inspiring renaissance through significant changes in leadership, expanded services, organizational stability, and a continued focus on the future.

## David C. Bryant Outstanding Service Award

*Recognizes members of AACT for significant, valuable, and lasting service to community theatre.*



### Tom Cordingley

(Helena, Montana) has been involved at Grandstreet Theatre in Helena, Montana for the last 30 years. Besides realizing in college that "theatre geeks throw the best parties," it was obvious to him that being part of this strange and enthusiastic group could refocus, and even direct, many young people to a safe and inclusive environment. He has been an actor and technician, served on the board (including as

board president), and in 1995 became Managing Director. Tom is an advocate for children and has paid for countless students to attend the Grandstreet Theatre School. He served as AACT's Montana State Contact for many years. Even in retirement, Tom continues to volunteer as an actor, technician, and fundraiser—stopping by to lend a hand by picking up a drill gun, speaking to an entire group of students, or with his wife Lisa providing scholarships and encouragement to young people interested in theatre. "Theatre has everything to do with life skills," he says. "I am proud to watch those kids who weren't sure where their crazy lives were headed, and see them become confident and in control. *That's theatre.*"



#### **Zada and Earl Jahnsen**

(Bulverde, Texas) caught the theatre bug when their son was in drama in the 1970s. In 1984, impressed by the quality of the Society Theatre and Arts Group, Etc. Inc. (S.T.A.G.E.) in rural Texas, the Jahnsen family built the organization a theatre. The property is on a stipend lease to the theatre, and remains active to this day. Over their almost 40 years of involvement, Zada and Earl have built sets, directed, sewed costumes, made props,

prepared programs, paid the bills, and cooked four-course meals for every performance of the dinner theatre. Zada served on the Texas Nonprofit Theatres (TNT) Board of Governors for several years, and the Jahnsens have provided scholarships for volunteers to attend annual TNT conferences. Zada & Earl have provided a quality space to present excellent theatre, made sure their volunteers had the best available training, involved young people, and planned for their succession to ensure the theatre would continue to survive and thrive. In their words, "We have seen over and over again the importance of artists/performers having a place to grow and display their talents. But, the most heartwarming stories and experiences have come from members of the audience who unexpectedly had an experience that touched their lives."

#### **Distinguished Merit Award**

*Presented to individuals and organizations in recognition of contributions made to promote and develop the highest standards for community theatre.*



#### **Jim Chervenka**

(Grand Rapids, Michigan) has been part of the Grand Rapids community theatre scene since 1975. When Grand Rapids Civic Theatre (GRCT) lost its Technical Director, Jim was asked to take on the position and he remained in that role for the next 35 years. He has always said that he didn't work for Grand Rapids Civic, but instead "for the hundreds of volunteers who come through the doors and want to do shows." Whenever Jim

talks about the Grand Rapids historic facility, the productions, the legacy, and the volunteers, a glint of magic comes into his eyes and an infectious sense of wonder courses through him. When it came time for GRCT to host the National AACTFest in 2015, they

could not think of a better person to lead the backstage team. "Now I am retired," he says, "and have been promoted from employee to volunteer. I get to be involved with Circle, Civic, Actor's, Jewish Theatre, Aquinas College, and Grand Rapids Community College. I loved what I did. I loved the volunteers. Now I can leave whenever I want to—I am no different from anyone. We *all* do it because we love the theatre, and we love our 'theatre families.'"



#### **Celia Couture**

(Tewksbury, Massachusetts) began a 35-year love for community theatre as a child, when her mother took her to see live plays and musicals. Some of her closest relationships are a result of her involvement with community theatre as a director, board member, and performer. She is most grateful for the actors, stage managers, and set, lighting, costume, and sound designers she has had the privilege to



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collaborate with and direct, and is “humbled by their profound love and sharing of the scripted word or their ability to tell a story through music, set design, lighting, or sound effect.” Celia has led almost a dozen state and regional festivals in Massachusetts, enjoying many weekends listening to and watching master classes, and believing professionally adjudicated festivals encourage theatrical risk-taking. She continues working to ensure that community theatre thrives in eastern Massachusetts, coordinating with several groups to create an alliance facilitating the sharing of resources and venue costs. Celia is especially proud of receiving this distinction, as she has always felt community theatre provides the opportunity to see live theatre at reasonable prices for those who might not be able to afford the high costs of professional theatre.



#### **Loween Getter**

(Webster City, Iowa) has been a leader, respected director, and actress in the Webster City Community Theatre (WCCT) for over 25 years. She was active in the acquisition and remodeling of its building - including two expansion projects - and has served in various board roles, including president. Over the past decade, Loween has successfully pursued grant opportunities to help fund remodeling, publicity, and such special projects as

youth acting camps and productions facilitated by the professional troupe, Camp Creamery. In addition to her work with WCCT, Loween has served in various positions on the Iowa Community Theatre Association Board of Directors. “The opportunity to interact with theatre-lovers from across the state at meetings, state conventions, festivals, and reviewing productions at other community theatres has broadened my knowledge base and challenged me to keep learning,” she explains. “It was community theatre that brought my husband and me together in 2006. I have no idea how my life would have played out had I not gotten involved in community theatre all those years ago.”

### **Special Recognition Award**

*Presented to persons or organizations whose contributions to community theatre are far-reaching and of a special nature.*



#### **Dr. Tim Ballweber and Ballweber Orthodontics**

(Helena, Montana) have sponsored the Grandstreet Theatre School camp in Helena, Montana for the past 16 years, including providing money for scholarships, t-shirts, and advertising. Ten years ago Dr. Ballweber offered to sponsor the theatre’s annual Christmas show, as well, and in the most recent five years underwrote the cost of a t-shirt for every child participating in the Christmas event.

Over the years, Dr. Ballweber and his team have provided over \$97,500 in funding to help children from many different states and countries attend Grandstreet Theatre School at an affordable price, an impressive sum for a small business in a community with a population of 29,596. “I watched my children grow up in the Grandstreet Community Theatre Program,” he explains. “Their participation in after school educational theatre programs, auditioning, and taking part in the community plays has given them tools and social skills that have helped them develop into young, confident adults with amazing talent. I have seen that same thing many times over with other youth in our community. Many have gone on to excel in theatre on a national level. I am also a strong believer in giving back to the community, particularly when it involves education and youth.”



#### **Sue Ellen Gerrells**

(Alabaster, Alabama) has taught drama classes for University of Maryland Extension, and worked in community theatre in the United States, the Republic of Singapore, and Japan. During that time she has been associated with over 135 productions as actor, producer, or director, and has served on the boards of several community theatres as artistic director and president. Sue Ellen has worked tirelessly over the years for the

## **Hilarious Comedy Plays!**



### **'Twas the Fight Before Christmas!**

Cast: 4 Female, 2 Male Length: Two Acts

Think your family is complicated? Meet the most dysfunctional family you can imagine as they try to navigate Christmas. Peace on earth and good will to all men? Not likely! Ever since her husband died, Mary’s horrible adult children have been ruining Christmas. This year, with the help of a suicidal French psychiatrist, Mary is determined to take Christmas back. Hilarious and uplifting Christmas comedy.

### **My In-laws are Outlaws!**

Cast: 5 Female, 2 Male Length: Two Acts

Annie discovers her in-laws are outlaws... and her mother-in-law has hired a mad group of assassins to kill her! How will Annie, a mild mannered Librarian, outwit the best of the Italian, Russian and Irish contract killers? This is outrageous, laugh out loud comedy at its best.

### **The Old People Are Revolting!**

Cast: 5 Female, 2 Male Length: Two Acts

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Alabama Conference of Theatre, as well as for AACT and various community theatres around the country, receiving awards for acting in the United States, Singapore, and at the International Community Theatre Festival in Dundalk, Ireland. "Community theatre has been a major part of my life for the past 50 years," she points out. "It's where I hone my theatrical skills, utilize my creativity and imagination, and, most important, make life-long friends. I love the collaborative nature as well as the discipline of play production. Simply put, community theatre is *home*."



### Rhonda Wilson

(Gainesville, Florida) founded the Star Center Children's Theatre in Gainesville, Florida 15 years ago. She had no funds, but with hope and determination, her dream of giving youth and their families the opportunity to learn, grow, and enjoy the beauty of the arts came true. She wanted to give kids who didn't have a chance to take acting, singing, and instrumental classes, a place to go that was low-cost or no-cost. Rhonda

continues to volunteer with the Center, and she continues to do it because of the kids. "Community theatre is an open playground for all kinds of people," she emphasizes. "Theatre not only provides performing skills, but life skills. My mission is to bring unity to people who would otherwise be divided. Theatre provides that opportunity." Rhonda has helped youth gain confidence through performance and classes, and the Star Center has brought people together from throughout the community through the arts. Rhonda has recently won the Allstate National Champion for Good Award, State of Florida Diversity and Inclusion Award, Spirit of Gainesville Award, and many more recognitions, including the Distinguished Career Award from the Florida Theatre Conference for her work with children and community theatre.

## Robert E. Gard Superior Volunteer Award

*Presented to individuals above the age of 65 who have faithfully served community theatre on a non-paid basis for over 25 years.*



### Beverly Allen

(Helena, Montana) has provided unmatched service to the Grandstreet Theatre in Helena, both onstage and behind the scenes, during the theatre's 40-year history. Over three and a half decades, she has immersed herself in all aspects of theatre and says she feels personally "enriched by the multigenerational relationships." Her particular gift is set building and painting. Colleen Mockler, another long-time friend of Grandstreet, says,

"We found a picture from 39 years ago showing Bev painting the set for *South Pacific* (1976), and so we walked upstairs and showed it to Bev – where she was painting the set for *Beauty and the Beast* (2013)." Pete Hardie, first Resident Scene Designer and Technical Director at Grandstreet said, "Bev Allen is an exceptional volunteer and overall positive force for good in theatre and in life. Dedicated, creative, and hardworking people like her keep community theatre going. We'd be lost without her." And, for Beverly, the feeling is mutual; "As the Grandstreet family grandmother, it keeps me young at heart. I can't imagine living in a community without live theatre."



### Barbara Christensen

(Hartland, Wisconsin) joined the Lake Country Players in Hartland in the spring of 1970, making the group her theatrical home for 45 years. Through the years, Barb has been involved in all things theatre, both on and off the stage. She has acted, directed a multitude of productions, served on many backstage crews (props, makeup, lights, costumes), and most recently as a member of the board of directors,



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costume room committee, and reading committee chair. Barb's very first role was in *Calamity Jane*, and her last stage acting role was the cantankerous mother (and mother-in-law) in *Moon Over Buffalo*. She is and has been an instrumental part of Lake Country Players. Barb has lived in Hartland for over 25 years, and currently shares her apartment with two furry children, her cats, Sterling and Pumpkin.



### **Margi Ritscher**

(Ansbach, Germany) has tirelessly and consistently served the U.S. Army Europe Entertainment Theatre program for over 25 years, longer than any other U.S. Army Entertainment volunteer. Since 1995, Margi has been a prolific and valuable volunteer director, choreographer, musical director, costume designer, and performer in over 85 productions. Her enthusiasm, commitment, and selfless service, in addition to her generous and gifted

mentorship, has greatly impacted the development of both adult and youth volunteers. Overall, she has contributed much to the Entertainment mission of serving volunteers, directly increased the quality of life at U.S. Army Communities in Europe, and assisted the Entertainment staff in supporting soldiers, civilians, and their families. "What makes an Army community theatre so different from a state-side theatre is the high turn-over rate," she says. "One hardly has the same people over an extended period of time, and these people, ranging in age from 4 to 70, always come with vastly different levels of experience. This, however, is a large gift, because it truly makes the theatre a place of education for absolutely everyone involved."



### **Susan Tucker**

(Concord, Massachusetts) has been a member of the Concord Players for more than 40 years. When gold and purple threads of light weave into an Alabama sunset on the stage, Susan is at the lighting board. When an actor reaches for his prop so surely placed that he knows he doesn't have to look for it, it is Susan who has placed it. She is the script doctor, crew chief, mentor, the designer, the doer, and the unflappable stage manager. Susan

builds bridges as well. As a representative for the Players of Concord and the eastern Massachusetts regional theatre community, she has also served on boards for several community theatres in neighboring towns. Susan frequently functions as mediator, negotiating difficult compromises in the interest of communities at large. She is the spine of the Concord Players organization; her acumen in the theatre is surpassed only by her quiet grace and unassuming demeanor. In Susan's words, "Putting on plays is a collaborative process. It's about problem solving and working towards a common goal. It can be a joy and mighty stressful. But, when it all comes together on opening night, it is quite magical."



### **Dr. Charles "Bud" Vear**

(Hillsdale, Michigan) began his involvement with the Sauk Theatre in Jonesville, Michigan, in 1968, and now, 48 years later and nearing 90 years of age, continues to volunteer on and off stage. In 1972 Bud and his wife Gloria chaired a fundraising committee to purchase the Jonesville Community Building and, after modifications, the Sauk Theatre was born. Bud's biggest role was playing Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, and he was right at home playing

the father of a large family, since he and Gloria have 12 children. In 1979 the Sauk Theatre suffered major damage when old wiring caused a fire. Bud and Gloria again led a fundraising drive which helped to rebuild, renovate, and update the theatre. Bud spent over a year creating a 200-plus-page book to commemorate the theatre's 50th anniversary, including pictures and memories from volunteers

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throughout the theatre's history. Bud is currently a trustee on the board, and in 2013 led a major fundraising drive to completely upgrade the theatre's lighting system. Says Bud, "The opportunity to be part of community theatre history has been a privilege, and the success of our little theatre has been a testimony to the volunteer efforts of many people."

## Mort Clark International Achievement Award

*Recognizes an individual who, or an organization that, has accomplished significant achievement in the promotion of excellence in international community theatre.*



### Eva Moore

(Ontario, Canada) has been involved with community theatre all her life, which has led her, quite naturally, into a successful career on every side of the stage. As Executive Director of Nova Scotia Drama League, she travelled the province and the world, working with hundreds of avid theatre folk who practice theatre for nothing more than pure joy. After attending her first international theatre festival in 1987, Eva produced the Great Canadian International Theatre Festival in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in

1988, hosting 19 theatre groups from across Canada and around the world. An executive board member of the International Amateur Theatre Association (IATA/AITA) from 1991 to 2001, she created the prestigious Liverpool International Theatre Festival in 1992, and still serves as its Artistic Producer. In 2003, Eva bid for and won the AITA/IATA World Theatre Congress and Festival for Halifax, hosting 18 theatre companies and 300 delegates over 10 days in the historic port city. She was instrumental in the start-up of the Yakumo International Theatre Festival in Japan. Once referred to as one of the "Grand Old Broads of Canadian Theatre," Eva is a proud Past President of the National Multicultural Theatre Association and Theatre Canada. She resides in Bala, Muskoka, where she enjoys a slightly quieter lifestyle, and still dabbles in theatre. ♦

# Careers in Theatre

## Highlighting professional staff changes in theatre

Des Moines, Iowa - **Jonathan Hudspeth** has joined the **Des Moines Community Playhouse** staff as production manager. Hudspeth received his BA in theatre from the University of Northern Iowa with an emphasis in performance, production, and design. He has worked in Washington, D.C. and California with such companies as Woolly Mammoth, Shakespeare Theatre Company, and Signature Theatre. His scenic design credits include *The Tempest* (Shakespeare in the Park), *Abduction from the Seraglio* (In Series Opera Co.), *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (Steven Sondheim Performing Arts Center), and *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* (Tallgrass Theatre).

Des Moines, Iowa - **Tracy Stewart** has joined the **Des Moines Community Playhouse** staff as technical director. Stewart received his BA in theater design and production management from the University of Northern Iowa, and a second bachelor's degree from Simpson College in chemistry with a teaching endorsement. He worked for Blackhawk Lighting as lighting department head. He has worked with the local International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) stagehands union as well as Norwalk High School as auditorium manager. His design credits include *The Odd Couple* (scenic), *True West* (scenic), and *Prelude to a Kiss* (lighting), at Tallgrass Theatre Company and *Jesus Christ Superstar* (lighting) at Waterloo Community Playhouse.

Des Moines, Iowa - **Susanna Douthit** has been named the **Des Moines Community Playhouse** costume shop manager. She joined the Playhouse staff in 2014 as costume shop assistant. Douthit has designed costumes for theater, opera, ballet, modern dance, ice skaters, parades, and puppets for more than four decades, from New York City to San Francisco and places farther afield. ♦

AACT welcomes submissions to Careers in Theatre. Positions listed are paid professional positions. Submit your new hires to Cranston Dodds at [cran@aact.org](mailto:cran@aact.org)

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## The Casualty of Cupid's Arrow

by David Dietz

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Two of our managing directors attended a recent AACT conference and came home so energized and inspired by networking with theaters from all over the country which face similar challenges. I personally LOVE *Spotlight* and the information I get about new projects, products, and theater services. St. George Musical Theater is a proud member of the AACT!

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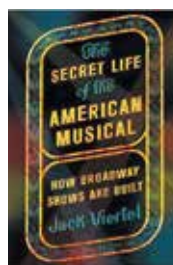
Cast of 6 (3m,3w) 85 min. running time

script/info at **InfinityStage.com**



Molly Paradise (**Ashley Mitchell**) just can't seem to get rid of the bizarre crew of misfits who have invaded her home, as eccentric hitchhiker Winifred (**Judy Bruno Bennett\***), kneeling, wonders if it's time to start looking for a new boyfriend, and hopelessly inept med student Muffin (**Kalista Tazlin**), checks for signs of life while trying to avoid spilling her wine in Act III of the New York Production of *The Will to Get Married* at Hudson Guild Theatre. \*member Actors' Equity Association

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### The Secret Life of the American Musical How Broadway Shows Are Built

by Jack Viertel  
Sarah Crichton Books  
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For almost a century, Americans have been losing their hearts and losing their minds in an insatiable love affair with the American musical. Americans love musicals. Americans invented musicals. Americans perfected musicals. But what, exactly, is a musical?

In *The Secret Life of the American Musical*, Jack Viertel takes them apart, puts them back together, sings their praises, marvels at their unflagging inventiveness, and occasionally despairs over their more embarrassing shortcomings. In the process, he invites us to fall in love all over again by showing us how musicals happen, what makes them work, how they captivate audiences, and how one landmark show leads to the next—by design or by accident, by emulation or by rebellion—from *Oklahoma!* to *Hamilton* and onward.

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### Southeastern Theatre Conference, Inc.

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The Charles M. Getchell New Play Contest is dedicated to the discovery, development, and publicizing of worthy new plays and playwrights. One winning script will be selected.

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Winner will receive a \$1,000 cash award during the gala banquet and an all-expense paid trip to SETC's 68th Annual Convention in Lexington, Kentucky, where both a critique and staged reading of the winning play will be held. The winning play will also be considered for publication in *Southern Theatre* magazine.

One submission per playwright only. Full length plays or related one acts; no musicals or children's plays. Plays must be unproduced (no professional productions) and unpublished. Readings and workshops are acceptable.

Deadline: June 1, 2016

Details: [setc.org/scholarships-awards/getchell-new-play-contest](http://setc.org/scholarships-awards/getchell-new-play-contest)



AACT Festival Commission members Paul Nelson and Joan Luther share a quiet moment between sessions of the Sherman C. Ward Jr. Original Works Theatre Celebration, held in Lewes, Delaware March 17-20, 2016. The event served as the Eastern States Theatre Association (ESTA) festival for 2016; Paul was alternate adjudicator and Joan serves on the ESTA Board of Directors.

Ron Ziegler



Ron Ziegler

AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford (left), Past President Linda Lee, Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds and Festival Commission Member Wanda Schenk finish breakfast while discussing the events of the day at the AACT Winter Meetings. The event took place in San Antonio, TX, February 18-21, 2016



Ron Ziegler

AACT President Murray Chase, flanked by AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford, calls the Board to order at the AACT Winter Meetings

AACT President Murray Chase, STEC Community Theatre Festival Vice Chair Lyle Tate, Susan Smith, and SETC Community Theatre Festival Chair Sue Ellen Gerrells visit at SETC in Greensboro, North Carolina March 2-5, 2016



Julie Crawford

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David Sokolowski

AACT Festivals Coordinator and festival adjudicator Ron Ziegler (right) chats with Delaware State Contact Ann Stevens at the Sherman C. Ward Jr. Original Works Theatre Celebration (2016 Eastern States Theatre Association festival), March 18-20 in Lewes, Delaware. Ron's fellow adjudicators were Mark Sharf (left) and Michael Flanagan.





## Give, Get, or Get Off!

by Twink Lynch

In the last article we looked at the five stages of development in community theatre. A key point may already be obvious to you: in order to move from stage to stage, we need to have not only a dream but also human and financial resources. The Board of Directors is the source of both of these resources, but sometimes a Board can seem absolutely clueless about this area of responsibility, especially the fundraising aspect. I'm sure you've all heard this adage: Board Members need to give, get, or get off! But what does that really mean?

**First, it means all Board Members are expected to be members, season ticket holders, and donors.** In some theatres, that would be three separate commitments. In others, Board Members can fulfill all three at once because season ticket holders are called members, and there are various donor categories of season tickets. It definitely means that besides supporting the theatre by purchasing season tickets, each Board Member makes an annual donation — yes, even if she also volunteers her time and talent to the organization in production capacities.

For example, some theatres have several donor levels of season tickets as well as a “regular season ticket” option. Board Members are encouraged to try to support the theatre at least at the lowest contributing level of season ticket membership. As an example, this might include two tickets to six productions and a donation of \$55 for a total cost of \$225. Some Board Members can't afford that and instead become regular members (1 ticket to six shows for \$85, no donation), and they give to the theatre in other ways, through time and/or in-kind service. The bottom line here is this: every Board Member must be a season ticket holder/member. How else can the theatre expect to sell season tickets to the greater community? If the people who care the most about the theatre don't support it financially, why should anyone else?

**Second, Board Members are expected to support special fundraising events by purchasing tickets.** Sometimes, when tickets are high dollar amounts, some Board Members can't afford it — but they can “contribute” just the same, through personal time (work on the event) or in-kind service.

**Third, Board Members should play a leadership role in “ultimate” giving, by mentioning the theatre in their wills and encouraging others to do the same.** They should also establish an ongoing, planned giving program including more sophisticated donor vehicles to benefit the theatre over the long term. It is never too soon to establish such a program.

What if a capital campaign is on the agenda? Board Members need to **ante up first and must have 100% participation** if the theatre is to have the moral leverage to ask the community for the big gifts usually sought in such a campaign.

But here's the rub. Capital campaigns aren't done very often in any given Board Member's lifetime, and many Board Members may not realize the very different character of this kind of fundraising. Capital gifts are sought and usually given from appreciated assets, not from cash on hand. If you can write one check for your gift, you are not giving enough! We're talking about “stop & think” gifts that

might include stocks, bonds, annuities, or real property (land). The gift is supposed to be big enough so that most people pledge to give it over 3 to 5 years. If done right, it will probably be bigger than some of your Board Members ever dreamed of being asked for, let alone giving.

In smaller and/or younger theatres, where the average Board Member is under 50 years of age, this expectation will be more difficult because of college expenses, sometimes K-12 expenses, no time for assets to mature, etc. In that case, the theatre may want to establish a “Financial Development Council” of older supporters to



enhance Board giving. Remember, too, that sometimes a gift can be augmented by a company match, for which the Board Member/donor gets credit as a “getter.”

Board Members who have never run a capital campaign during any previous Board service may be shocked to discover what is expected of them, but a basic rule in fundraising is you cannot ask others to give major gifts if you have not given what is, for you, a major gift, especially when you're the Board Members who are supposed to care the most. I am dismayed that so many Board Members do not understand this responsibility, expecting somehow that corporations and foundations will supply the needed dollars. In reality, corporations and foundations only supply about 10 percent of all donated dollars nationally. Ninety percent of the funds come from individual donors, living or dead.

Major donor prospects will want to know what the Board itself has given, and if Board Members haven't given “sacrificially” (whatever that means to each individual Board Member) to this campaign, prospective major donors probably will not be motivated to contribute at a “make-a-difference” level themselves. Board giving is absolutely critical to the success of a capital campaign. What about “getting?” A prime Board responsibility is soliciting other donors, directly or by introducing the right solicitor to the potential donor. This obligation often strikes terror in the hearts of Board Members. Many feel they “cannot ask for money!” It's a learnable skill, dear readers, and if we truly love our theatres, we will bite the bullet and learn how. If that's an impossible goal for some of us, we can write letters, hold coffees, or be a host at other people's parties.

If we have Board Members who feel they cannot “give” or “get,” then it is the President's (and only the President's) job to thank them for their service and ask them to serve in some other capacity — in other words, to “get off” and make room for someone who is willing to accept all the responsibility of Board service. This calls for “tough love” and may need some rehearsal, but it can and must be done.

Some Board Members may say they were never told during recruitment of this obligation. Shame on us, if true. Shame on them, if not. But if true we need to remedy that immediately by drawing up a specific list of expectations of Board Members that includes annual giving and fundraising at whatever level is required at this point in time for our theatre.

The bottom line is that fundraising is critical to the life and growth of our theatres. Board Members are charged with this responsibility. They can delegate some fundraising tasks, but they can never delegate the responsibility. Truth to tell, successful fundraising provides as big a high as a successful opening night, and the role of the fundraiser is truly a starring one. Haven't you always wanted to be a star? Now's your chance! Break a leg! ♦

*Twink Lynch wrote a regular column on boardsmanship for Spotlight for many years. Many of her articles are compiled into a relevant book for boards; Boards in the Spotlight, available at [aact.org/store](http://aact.org/store).*

*Reprinted from Boards in the Spotlight (pages 69-70).*

## Does your theatre have programs for those with special needs?

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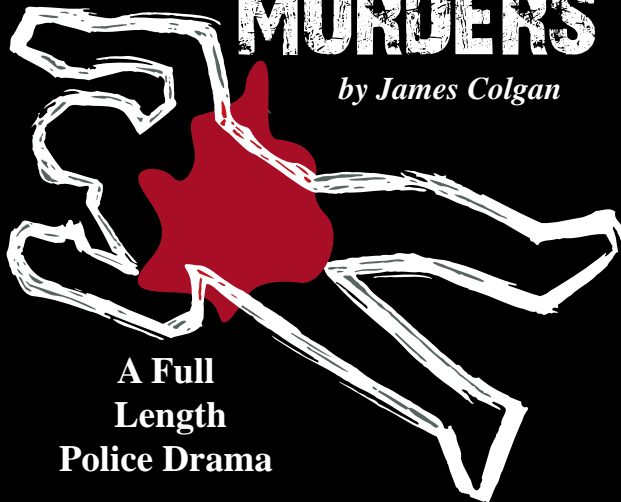
The Loveland Center's mission is to help adults with developmental disabilities live their lives to the fullest.

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Laurie Colton, Director of Marketing and Public Relations  
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Mar 25-April 9	AACT NewPlayFest World Premiere <i>Wash, Dry, Fold</i> by Nedra Pezold Roberts Chicago Street Theatre/Community Theatre Guild	IN Valparaiso	219-464-1636 chicagostreet.org aact.org/newplayfest
June 11	Iowa Community Theatre Association 2016 ICTA Convention	IA Sioux City	712-253-7017 iowacommunitytheatre association.com
June 23-25	Colorado Community Theatre Coalition *State Festival 2016	CO Salida	303-674-5037 cctcfestival.org
June 24-26	Wisconsin Association of Community Theatre WACTCon 2016	WI Wauwatosa	414-774-4768 wact.org

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