

Special Gifts Theatre, Inc.



To provide children and teens with special needs, a unique, creative drama experience enabling personal growth and breaking down stereotypes related to disabilities within the community at large.

Volume II

Executive Director's Corner

Special Gifts Theatre, Inc. (SGT) started its pilot program in 2000 with six children. This Fall, which begins our fourth year, we are “opening doors to new possibilities” to more than fifty children with special needs. Our wonderful SGT staff, who you will come to know in this newsletter, are guides to not only our students but over fifty peer mentors as well. The staff is joined by more than 80 adult volunteer production assistants. This incredible team enables us to showcase everyone’s “special gifts” in our fully staged musical production.

SGT provides children and teens with special needs, a unique, creative drama experience that facilitates personal growth in their lives. It also helps to break down stereotypes about disabilities within the community at large. Thanks to your continued support and generosity, SGT continues to realize these goals. We are grateful for your decision to make a difference in the lives of children with special needs.

Please come and share the incredible magic created through our upcoming production of **The Music Man** in February 2004. You will see first hand the doors that have been opened to possibilities because of your continued support and assistance. We promise you an experience you will never forget!



Susan B. Field,
Founder & Executive
Director

Meet the Staff!

All of the staff at Special Gifts Theatre, Inc. are accredited and licensed professionals in their respective fields with professional degrees and credentials. We are very fortunate to have each and every one of these talented people as part of our growing staff. This issue we are introducing “returning” staff. *Watch for profiles of our new staff in the next issue of SGT.*



JILL OLEFSKY,
Operations Manager

Jill became a part of the dream when SGT was still in its “idea” stage. Her passion to selflessly help others, combined with her business and organizational skills, has made her an invaluable member of the SGT team. Jill plays a vital role in the day to day operations of SGT as our “jack of all trades!”



JODI BERLINGER,
Program Director/Teacher

Jodi was the first staff member hired to help teach SGT classes. Jodi has a BS and MA in Special Education and brings with her over ten years of experience working with children with special needs. Her professional skills, enthusiasm and hard work help every child in SGT to shine.



BETH ROTHCHILD,
Production Co-Director/
Teacher/Choreographer

Beth begins her second year with SGT. Beth has her BFA with an emphasis in performance arts and dance. Her extensive experience with local camps and school programs enables SGT to rival any creative dramatics program around. Her personal dedication to each child makes every student a star.



CHRISTINE RYAN,
Production Co-Director/
Teacher

Christine begins her second year with SGT. Christine has a BFA in Theatre and Performance studies. She is truly our “Theatre Guru” with experience in all aspects of theatre, including acting, directing, stage managing and producing. Her energy is never ending and matches the enthusiasm of our SGT stars.



TOMMY RIEFKEN,
Technical Director

Tommy is also a driving force behind making our dream a reality at Special Gifts Theatre. Tommy is Founder and President of Kidstage, a premier children’s theatre program for children 2nd through 5th grade. He works his technical magic at SGT and our children refer to him as the “magician” with the magic he creates using microphones, lights and sets. Tommy makes our productions come alive for our students, staff and audience.

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Spotlight on Children with Special Gifts



Peter TenBrink is a very special young man who joined our program in 2001. His first role in a production was an orphan in "Annie". His "Special Gifts" were evident as he blossomed on and off stage. By the following year, Peter had the lead role of the scarecrow in the "Wizard of Oz" which was included in our production of "Hooray For Hollywood."

When planning his 11th birthday, Peter called each of his friends on the telephone and asked them to bring

money for "his" theatre program instead of a gift for him. Special Gifts Theatre received a beautiful note and "ten" individual checks made out to SGT. Each of Peter's friends gave a gift to SGT in the amount they would have spent on a birthday gift for Peter. What "special" friends Peter has! Peter is a superstar in so many ways!



Jacob Stoehr, a thirteen year old local boy never misses being in the audience for a SGT production. He is so impressed with the talent of our "special" stars, that he elected to donate a

portion of his monetary Bar Mitzvah gifts to support SGT. Jacob is proof that SGT educates and breaks down barriers between children with special needs and the community at large. He is also an example that you don't have to be *on stage, to be a star!*

Wish List!



As a not for profit organization, SGT relies on donations from Foundations, businesses and individuals to sustain the high quality programming, productions and scholarships for those children with financial needs. We have experienced tremendous growth during the past three years, which leaves us with a deficit in program supplies. If you are able to help us defray the costs of our programming and production by donating any of the following items or services, we would be grateful. All donations are tax deductible. Please consider supporting SGT by calling 847•564•7704.

Supplies:

Puppets
Marionettes
Musical Instruments (They can be toy instruments or real ones that are not in working order)
Financial Aid

Services:

Printing
Copying
Photography
Videography
Set Building (Carpentry)
Costumer
Public Relations
Production Assistants

The **Music Man** is one of the world's best loved and most often produced shows. Featuring an all American score, a charismatic con man teaches an entire town the joys of emotional risks. Please join us as the kids of Special Gifts Theatre and their mentors captivate you in this warm hearted, extraordinary show!

Northbrook Theatre, 3323 Walters Avenue
Saturday, February 21 & 28, 2004, at 4:00 pm
Sunday, February 22 & 29, 2004, at 1:00 pm

**Tickets Available
in January**

Special Gifts Theatre In the News!

Several Special Gifts Theatre staff and students presented a workshop at the Illinois Theatre Associations 2003 convention for the second consecutive year. SGT was invited to present due to the high profile and media coverage received over the past few years. The Illinois Theatre Association stressed how proud they were to be able to teach "theatre professionals" the importance of inclusion in the arts. This year some of our SGT "stars" were on hand to perform and answer questions.



SGT is featured in a new book available at Barnes and Noble! "Take Out Your Nose Ring, Honey, We're Going To Grandma's," is a popular new book written by Barbara Cooke, M.S., and Charleton Kendrick, Ed.M., LCSW. The book is a reassuring collection of anecdotes and stories of positive teen role models. An article is included about Susie Field's three teens who not only pushed her to create SGT but then rolled up their sleeves and helped to make the dream a reality.

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