

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 III

Executive Director's Corner

Special Gifts Theatre (SGT) is continuing to grow at an unbelievable rate! The program “keeps on giving” by providing children and teens with a wide array of special needs the opportunity to experience the joy and enrichment of theater arts. The process has touched the children with special needs, but also their families, mentors, staff, community and the more than 100 SGT volunteers. Special Gifts Theatre demonstrates that experiencing and understanding diversity leads everyone to accept and appreciate others for their inner creative being.

SGT is the only program of its kind in the nation. It has drawn much media attention and professional theater interest, as well as extensive community support. We could not be where we are today or continue to grow without all of you! With your continued support and generosity, SGT will be able to actively pursue our future vision of growth, expansion and formal research. We believe this will lead to enhanced learning and self-esteem for everyone who participates. SGT creates understanding for those with and without special needs as they learn about the “special gifts” that every individual has to offer.

Thank you for being a part of the magic!



Susan B. Field,
Founder & Executive
Director

“The Music Man” is a Huge Success!



Our February 2004 production of “The Music Man” was completely sold out for all four productions! Showing video footage of the children in the classroom and rehearsals enhanced the experience. This video developed by Susie Field and Sandy Barr gave the audience a chance to see first hand the work and adaptive techniques utilized by the staff to provide the most successful experience for each participant. The video chronology of the entire SGT process was incorporated as an integral part of the performance, and shown on two large screen TVs provided by **ABT Electronics**.

US Cellular provided SGT with a generous grant enabling us to purchase wireless microphones for every child participating in “The Music Man.” We were proud to have US Cellular at our performance so they could witness first hand the magic their generosity created.

Many children with speech and articulation difficulties were heard loud and clear for the first time in a public setting.

Walgreens provided a generous donation of cassette tapes for the students. This enabled each student to practice their lines and songs at home. This also helped contribute to their success of this production.

Added to the “The Music Man” was the inclusion of an “Academy Award” ceremony for all of the SGT participants. Our trophies received by the “actors” were donated by **Bob Bedford from Crown Trophy**.

Thank you to everyone who participated in anyway with this production. Each and every person who came in contact with SGT during this process and the final performances helped create the magic one more time!

Thank You!



The Superstars from the hit production, “The Music Man.”

Staff Profiles

We are proud to introduce you to some of the new members of our staff. They are a wonderful addition to our "Dream Team."



JUDY VASS,

Teacher/Production
Co-Director

Judy is in her second year with SGT and has been a practicing Occupational Therapist for more than 26 years. She has personal theater experience, both writing and performing for Second City Children's Theatre. Her combined theater and therapeutic skills are a wonderful addition to SGT. Judy's rapport with the children and her strong commitment to the SGT mission makes her a valuable member of our team!



**LADONNA
FREIDHEIM,**

Teacher/Production
Co-Director

Ladonna is new to our staff this year. She is an Occupational Therapist that has specialized in working with children. Prior to becoming an OT, Ladonna had a successful career as an arts administrator and was an accomplished dancer and performer. Ladonna is an outstanding addition to our team since her personal mission has always been to improve the quality of life for children with special needs and their families.



**MARQUITA
ROBINSON-ALTMAN,**

Teacher/Production
Co-Director

Marquita is beginning her second year with SGT. She has a BS in Occupational Therapy and a MS in Rehabilitation Services Administration. She has many years of professional theater and dance experience. She also brings more than 16 years of experience working with children with developmental delays and sensory integration dysfunction. Marquita's kindness and continuous smile has won the hearts of students and staffs alike!



LINDA DERMER,

Director of Mentor Program
& Classroom Aid

Linda is starting her second year with SGT. She brings experience as a diagnostic aid for several schools and has experience working with emotionally and physically disabled pre-primary children. Her instant rapport with all children makes her an outstanding addition to SGT. Linda's ability to enhance the SGT experience for our mentors makes her the best candidate for director of our Peer Mentor Program.

Spotlight on Community Support!

Special Gifts Theatre, Inc. relies on the generosity of its donors and supporters to keep the possibilities available and continuing the magic making programs and productions possible. SGT acknowledges and thanks the following grants received in 2003-2004.

U.S. Cellular • Circle of Service Foundation • Congregation Beth Shalom
Glenview Community Church • Glenview – Northbrook Kiwanis
Glenbrook North Key Club • Rotary Club of Northbrook
Marshall Fields • Chicago Community Trust Foundation
Special Kids Network
Wood Oaks Student Council
Lean on ME



SGT Parent Organization

SGT is proud to have a new Parent's Organization. Several parents have been hard at work coordinating. SGTPO is now an integral part of the success of Special Gifts Theatre, with nearly all parents involved. Fundraisers completed this year included: Dominicks Days, a Holiday Boutique and Music Man Raffle. Proceeds from these fundraisers are used exclusively for SGT classroom and production needs. SGTPO is expecting an exciting and productive 2004-2005 year. A special thank you to all of our parents who have worked so hard this year and to this year's officers:

*Shari Coe
Sharon Donnelly
Karen Meyers
Robin Mogul
Jill Puttrich*

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