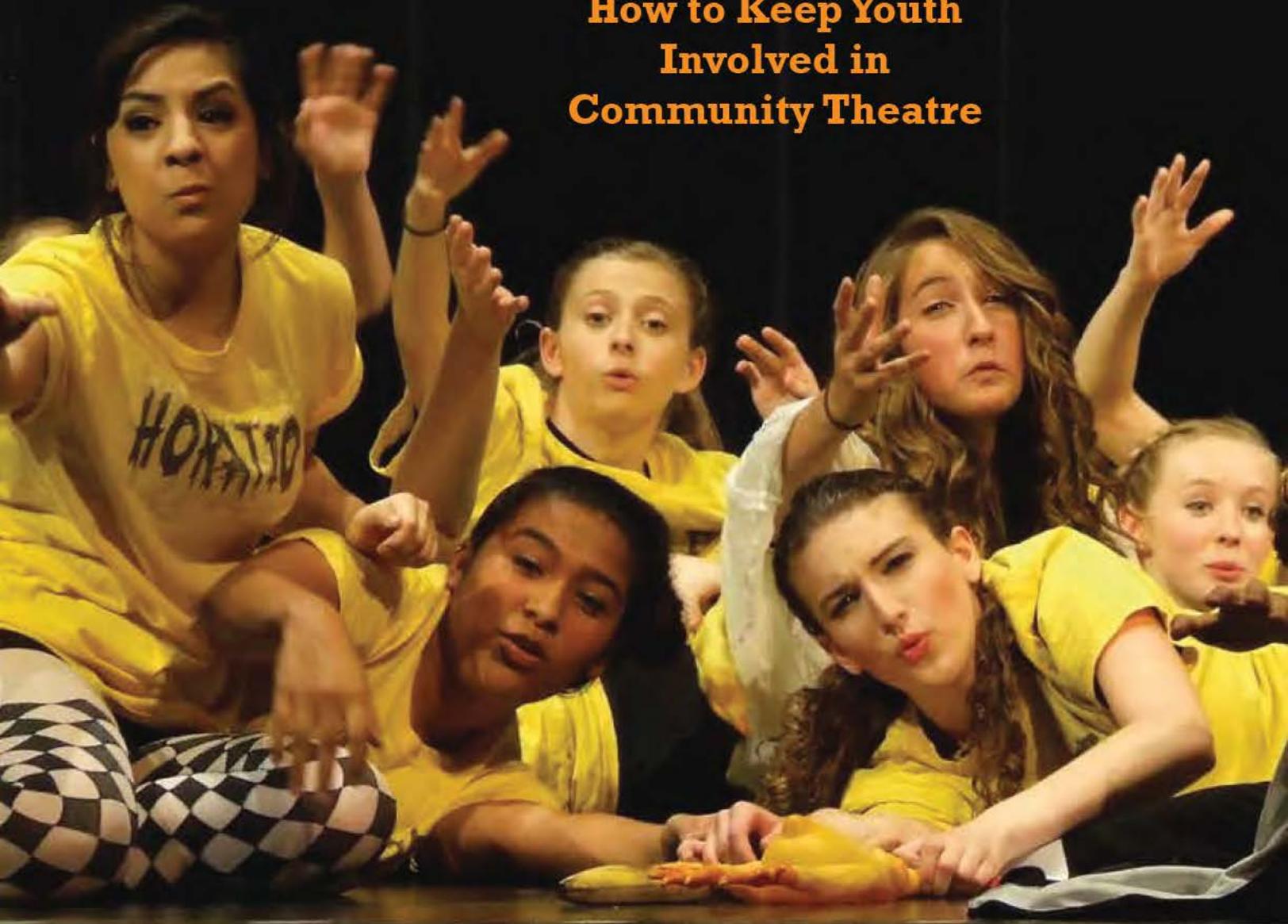


# spotlight

January/February 2016 \$2.50

american association of community theatre

## How to Keep Youth Involved in Community Theatre



**Trending  
Volunteers**

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2016**

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**Murray Chase**  
AACT President  
2015-2017

- “I don’t have time to spend talking about theatre. I have enough on my plate just doing theatre at home.”
- “Conferences are a waste of money. With the travel, accommodations, and fees, they’re just too expensive to justify going.”
- “What knowledge am I really going to gain? I know my craft already.”
- “What networking can I do? I don’t know these people.”
- “We have a show opening in 10 days. I just can’t get away.”

Those five quotes—or words similar to them—seem to be the top reasons for community theatre artists and organizations to eschew conferences. I’ve heard them all, and even used a couple of them through the years.

As I’m writing this, I have just returned to Florida (80 degrees) from the community theatre directors conference in Madison, WI (10 degrees). (To me it was bitterly cold; to Wisconsinites it was Tuesday). Not even the frigid air could stop a hot flow of ideas from rejuvenating every theatre person there. After 26 years, I still go; each time it pays off.

I’ve attended the AACT managers conferences, artistic directors conferences, and regional and state-level confabs of all sorts and sizes. Each time they pay off.

The returns may be in financial ideas that are easy to implement. They may be in knowledge of new products, trends, and artistic possibilities. They may be in meeting fellow artists and managers who have “just the thing” I need to borrow for next season.

**Usually, it’s all of the above.** Our getting together to discuss what we do is vital to the health of our own theatres. We are infused with new ideas, we save money, we make money, and we—most importantly—gain knowledge.

Our communication will help keep us growing, healthy, and thriving. I encourage us all to keep talking, help each other, and share the wealth (or pain). There are 7,000 community theatres across this land. We are all stronger when we’re connected.

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**\*Jeff Rane Uptown Players**

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*Hamilton* and Disney's *Aladdin* are now part of NYC 2016! Make a highlight of your summer by joining AACT at this great adventure. Register now for the best deal

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## Contacting AACT

AACT  
1300 Gendy Street  
Fort Worth, TX 76107  
817-732-3177  
(toll free) 866-OurAACT (687-2228)  
info@aacct.org

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

## On the Cover

Christine Hernandez, Keri St. Clair, Andrea Rodriguez, Wedin Waldorf, Dilyn Waldorf, Cassidy Lapp in *The Rules of Comedy* at Inspiration Stage/Slightly Off-Center Players, Sugar Land, TX. Photo by Linda M. Lee



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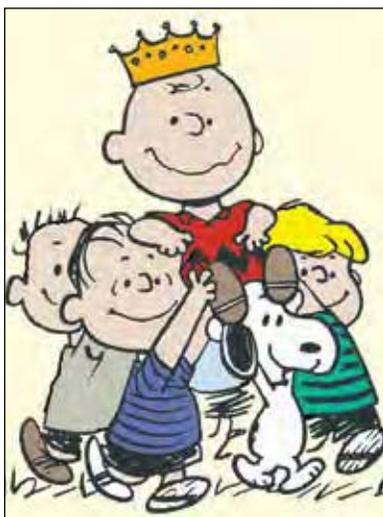


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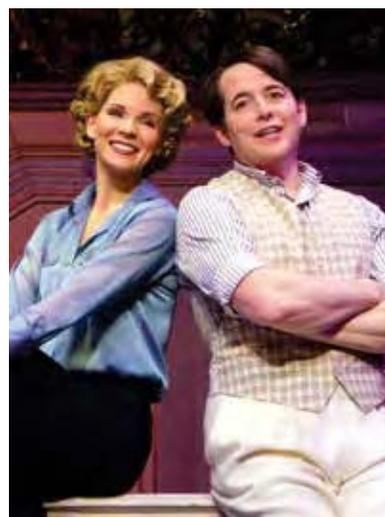
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Karen Matheny, Office Support Manager

Darlene DeLorenzo, Vendor Services Coordinator

Jill Patchin, Conference & Sponsorship Coordinator

Ron Ziegler, Festivals Coordinator

Winston Daniels, Office Assistant

## Upcoming Meetings

### AACT Winter Meetings 2016

February 18-21, 2016  
San Antonio, TX  
with a special reception hosted by The Playhouse San Antonio  
see details on page 50

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

## Upcoming Events

**World Theatre Day**, Sunday, March 27, 2016. World Theatre Day was created by the International Theatre Institute in 1961 to celebrate theatre around the world. Worldwide theatre events are organized in honor of the day. [www.iti-worldwide.org](http://www.iti-worldwide.org)

**Arts Advocacy Day**, March 7-8, 2016. Hosted by Americans for the Arts and cosponsored by 85+ national arts organizations, the 29th Annual Arts Advocacy Day will be the largest gathering of its kind. Advocates from America's cultural and civic organizations will meet in Washington, DC with members of Congress in support of issues like arts education policy, the charitable tax deduction, and funding for the National Endowment for the Arts. AACT is a cosponsor of this event. [www.americansforthearts.org/events/arts-advocacy-day](http://www.americansforthearts.org/events/arts-advocacy-day)

## Thanks

Sarah Marty and the University of Wisconsin Continuing Studies for hosting the AACT Executive Committee Meeting and conducting the Community Theatre Managing Directors Conference in November 2015

## 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.

Editor: David Cockerell  
Design: Jim Covault

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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, contact:  
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[kenneth.roberts@usi.biz](mailto:kenneth.roberts@usi.biz)

## Directors and Officers Liability Can We Afford Not to Have It?



by Ken Roberts

Behind every successful theatre is a hard-working board of directors that goes about the business of managing our theatres, helping with fundraising, set construction, acting, and all kinds of volunteer work. These individuals are charged with a great deal of the decision-making responsibility, especially in theatres without any employees. They often play a vital role in the direction our theatres take onstage, backstage, and financially, yet many of these unsung heroes are left unprotected in the event that someone decides to make a claim against a theatre for something other than bodily injuries or property damage. We can purchase protection for them in the form of Directors & Officers Liability insurance.

**If our theatres don't have Directors & Officers Liability, or D&O insurance, the personal assets of each member of our board are exposed if a judgment is rendered against our theatre.**

Examples of claims that our boards may be liable for are: mismanagement of funds, mistreatment of volunteers, irresponsible administration or management, and even unfair hiring or termination procedures. Whether intentional or not, the ultimate responsibility for these types of "wrongful acts" rests with the board of directors. What most volunteers don't know, including some board members, is that if our theatres

don't have Directors & Officers Liability, or D&O insurance, the personal assets of each member of our board are exposed if a judgment is rendered against our theatre. The courts can order that their personal accounts be frozen and used to pay a claimant if the theatre is found to have committed a "wrongful act."

Strong boards are made up of members who generously donate more than their time, and these individuals are often entrenched with the other philanthropic members of our communities, which help us raise the funds we need to perpetuate our art form, both now and for future generations. These are the people who stand to lose the most by offering themselves as board volunteers. To attract and keep these essential volunteers, we must consider protecting their personal assets with D&O insurance. In fact, many individuals will not serve on a board that doesn't have this coverage in today's litigious environment, and we must be prepared to answer the question of whether we offer this protection or not. If the answer is no, can we risk losing these potential volunteers?

The vast majority of nonprofit community theatres have small budgets to match their small revenues, and spending valuable programming resources on yet another insurance product that we hope we'll never have to use is usually a tough decision. We often purchase insurance coverage for our buildings, theatrical properties, and even injuries to our volunteers, but when considering whether or not we can afford to purchase D&O insurance, we must consider whether we can afford not to protect one of our most precious resources, our board of directors. ♦

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# AACT New York Adventure 2016

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

See Broadway shows and experience Manhattan's Times Square with community theatre friends and AACT family. Make a highlight of your summer of 2016 by joining AACT at this great adventure July 7-10. 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. The hotel is connected to the Hudson Theatre, a beautiful landmark built in 1903.

## Register NOW for the best deal! Register online at [aact.org/nyc](http://aact.org/nyc)

Save \$200 by registering by February 1! The early bird rate for AACT members is \$1,200 per person, double occupancy; \$1,575 single occupancy. The early bird rate is good through February 1. Registration includes three nights hotel, two Broadway Shows, AACT Saturday dinner at Sardi's, Specialty Tours, and more.

## Only \$250 holds your place. Pay \$250 now and the rest in installments.

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!

See the sights of the Big Apple. There will be time to explore the city. If you're not sure of striking out on your own, don't worry! You'll be surrounded by friends who can share your adventures, provide you with tour options, teach you how to use the subway, when it's better to catch a cab, and how to get half-price show tickets. Radio City Music Hall is nearby, as is Lincoln Center, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rockefeller Center, and Central Park. Explore Manhattan with a boat tour around the island, a visit to the Statue of Liberty, or just enjoy the theatre shows, the cafes, and restaurants.

## Are you thinking of a fundraiser for your theatre?

Customize this trip for a group from your theatre. For details contact Jill Patchin at [jill@aact.org](mailto:jill@aact.org).



New York Adventure 2016 allows plenty of time to explore the city. Here, pedestrians enjoy the excitement of Times Square, only half a block from the Millennium Broadway Hotel.



A limited number of tickets have been secured for **Hamilton** and Disney's **Aladdin** for the AACT New York Adventure 2016. These tickets are going fast! Register now to secure your ticket to these performances. There is an additional \$15 fee for Hamilton, that will be added to your registration.

Other Broadway shows are currently being negotiated for the AACT New York Adventure 2016. Registration includes two Broadway shows. You choose two Broadway shows when the complete list of available shows are secured. Check in at [aact.org/nyc](http://aact.org/nyc) to see details.

check out what is playing on Broadway - [www.broadway.com](http://www.broadway.com)

## Sponsors for New York Adventure 2016



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# 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 a workshop with a Broadway performer, special seminars, and the opportunity to create and nourish connections with theatre youth from across the country.

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



## AACT New York Adventure 2016 Schedule

### Tuesday 7/5/2016

5:00 pm AACT Executive Committee meeting

### Wednesday 7/6/2016

9:30 am AACT Finance Committee meeting

11:00 am AACT Board meeting

### Thursday 7/7/2016 NYC Adventure Begins!

Arrive in the Big Apple and check in to the Millennium Broadway Hotel

AACT Committee meetings

2:00 pm *HAMILTON* at the Richard Rodgers Theatre

Subway Tour Is it true that the Bronx is Up and the Battery's Down?

5:00-6:00 pm Meet & Greet See who else is in town for the NYC Adventure

7:00 pm Broadway Show

10:30 pm Join friends (and make new ones) for a nightcap!

*This is a preliminary schedule. Times and events are subject to change*

### Friday 7/8/2016

9:00 am-5:00 pm AACT Committee meetings  
Youth Summit

10:00 am Theatre District Walking Tour Times Square is just outside your door! Tour will end at the TKT booth - Pick up tickets for an extra show at a discount

7:00 pm Broadway Show

10:30 pm Join friends (and make new ones) for a nightcap!

### Saturday 7/9/2016

10:00 am Annual AACT Membership Meeting and National AACT Awards Presentation  
Youth Summit

10:45 am AACT Board Meeting

Free Time Catch a matinee, do some shopping, check out the sights!

2:00 pm Disney's *ALADDIN* at the New Amsterdam Theatre

5:00 pm -7:00 pm Dinner at Sardi's

8:00 pm Enjoy your evening! See a show, ride the Staten Island Ferry, join a guided tour of lower Manhattan...

10:30 pm Join friends (and make new ones) for a nightcap!

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# The American Association of Community Theatre is connecting America's theatres

## There are many benefits to AACT membership.

- Members **network**. AACT connects members online, on the phone, and in person to a community of people who share your passion and understand your issues and needs.
- Members access **resources** with the AACT website, *Spotlight* magazine, workshops, and conferences that help answer questions and inspire artistic choices for your theatre's growth and development.
- Members attend and participate in theatre **festivals** that offer you the best of the best from theatres across the country.
- Members **advocate** for the Arts and know the issues that face community theatres locally, regionally, and nationally.
- Members **represent** the artistic and economic impact that theatre has on a community. As a member, AACT enriches your theatre involvement and enhances the productivity of your organization.

AACT represents the cumulative interests of more than 7,000 theatres across the United States and its territories, as well as theatre companies with the U.S. Armed Services overseas:

- 7000 theatres strong
- More than a 1.5 million volunteers
- Over 46,000 productions per year
- Entertaining an audience of 86 million people
- A combined annual budget of well over \$980 million

*The festivals, conferences and workshops that AACT offers not only broaden my theatrical knowledge, they also connect me to a strong network of fellow artists. I can say that I have friends in community theatres all over the U.S., and they gladly support me when I'm opening a new show or looking for answers to my newest theatrical dilemma.*

Emily Anderson, Midland Center for the Arts, Midland, MI



*Being a member of AACT has been invaluable to me. Their conferences are top-notch with fabulous workshops and networking opportunities.*

Dee Dee O'Conner, Bellingham, WA

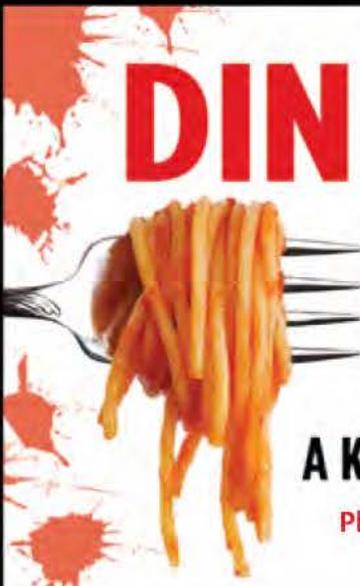
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# AACTFest - Join the Fun!

by Ron Ziegler, AACT Festivals Coordinator

AACTFest is an exciting process, involving community theatres in every corner of the country, and on military bases in Europe.

It culminates in a national festival every two years that features 12 productions that have received top honors in their respective state and regional festivals — all of which adhere to a common set of rules documented in the *AACT Festival Handbook*. This ensures a level playing field for all.

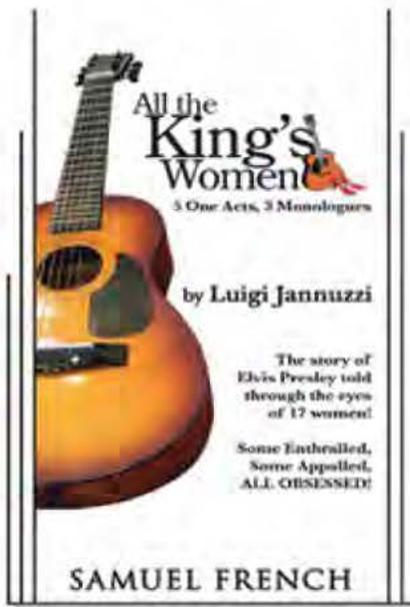
A festival typically presents three to five shows per day, each one limited to sixty minutes or less. Each cast and crew have ten minutes to move their set out of a 10 x 10 square of backstage storage, and get it ready for “curtain.” After the performance professional adjudicators give their analyses to the cast, director and crew. Thus, everyone in the audience gets to see excellent theatre, followed by positive, enlightening, and engaging critiques.

Festivals typically present theatre skills workshops as well, plus an awards party where the show that will go on to the next level is announced, and awards for acting, directing, and technical achievement are given.

## Great reasons to enter a festival

- Fire up the imagination and interest of your group, and motivate them to think in new directions.
- See some of the best theatre around, and get great ideas for your next season.
- Meet terrific people who are doing exciting theatre.

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this play rocks!”



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- Stimulate creativity in your group, and get them to reach for higher ideals.

Make the festival experience fun by producing and watching great shows, meeting wonderful people, and attending great parties.

AACTFest state festivals begin more than a year prior to the national festival. All regional festivals must be completed by the first weekend in May prior to the national festival, to give advancing companies enough time to prepare.

## AACTFest 2017 begins soon

The AACTFest cycle is named for the year in which the national festival occurs. The first of the AACTFest 2017 state festivals will occur in the spring of this year; by the end of summer at least four festivals will have already taken place.

Planning for the 2017 festival cycle began before the 2015 cycle ended last summer with the national festival in Grand Rapids. The AACT Festival Committee solicits input during each cycle, so the process may be fine-tuned for the next cycle to provide the best experience possible for participants. Every two years the *AACTFest Handbook* is updated to reflect this fine tuning, so the process may begin again with everyone following the same set of updated rules. The *AACTFest 2017 Handbook* will be available by February 2016 at [aact.org/handbook](http://aact.org/handbook).

## State Festivals

State festival sites are chosen by state theatre associations or by a theatre volunteering, and the preparations begin. A state festival chair is chosen and he or she recruits other volunteers and begins the organizing.

State festival preparation begins as much as two years prior to the event. A theatre facility is secured, a hotel (or hotels) selected, adjudicators engaged, and volunteers recruited and assigned. Details on the process can be found in AACT's publication *A Guide to Hosting AACTFest*, found on the AACT website under “Festivals and Events.”

## Regional Festivals

Productions advance from the state festivals to regional festivals, which are structured with the same attention to detail, with the added responsibility of hosting out-of-state guests (lodging, long distance arrangements, etc.). Details of regional festivals are also available in *A Guide to Hosting AACTFest*.

## The National Festival

AACTFest 2017 culminates with a National Festival in Rochester, MN June 26 - July 1, 2017. By the time AACTFest 2017 ends, there will have been approximately 40 state festivals with more than 200 theatre productions, followed by 60 or so theatres performing in regional festivals. The national festival also includes workshops, social events, sightseeing and networking opportunities, ending with a festival awards presentation.

It's an invigorating process, and one worth joining, in a celebration of American community theatre! ♦

# How They Raised The Cash and Hit The Road to AACTFest



by Liz Lydic and Gil Savage

Theatre companies participating in AACTFest, whether at the state, regional or national level, find it an exhilarating, fascinating, and a unique experience. It's also a challenging one.

Most of the challenges are artistic (selecting the right production, for example) and logistical (transporting people, sets, and costumes). Fortunately, these are similar to the planning and decision-making processes most companies use routinely. However, financing festival participation may call on unfamiliar knowledge and skills.

The good news is that many theatres — even those with little festival experience — have developed successful fundraising techniques geared toward travel and other expenses associated with AACTFest. Even more important, they are sharing those strategies here, with the hope that they will inspire other companies — perhaps your own — to take part in AACTFest.

**Planning for AACTFest is the first important step toward reaching your fundraising goals.**

“We see the competition as more than a celebration of theatre,” explains Melissa Riley, founder of the Beaverton (OR) Civic Theatre. “It is an opportunity to learn and improve our shows.” Kristy Meanor, Executive Director of Wetumpka (AL) Depot Players, agrees, “The experience for our actors, our board, and our community was fantastic.” And, as Jeffrey Brown, Executive Director of Playhouse 2000 in Kerrville, TX, points out, participation “provides a certain level of ‘bragging rights’ in our community, which helps us with subscriptions, memberships, and sponsorships.”

## Start with a Plan

Planning for AACTFest is the first important step toward reaching your fundraising goals. The further you progress in an AACTFest cycle (from local to state, from regional to national), the more expenses you need to cover.

“The first thing is to plan for the expense in your yearly budget,” says Tom Booth, of the Tupelo (MS) Community Theatre. “I budget for at least state and regional competitions. I typically raise additional funds after we get past the state festival, because I know that I will get more support once I can say ‘state festival winner’ or ‘winner of state festival for the last four years.’”

In all cases, the common success factor is good planning for both travel expenses and logistics. For starters, producing a traveling show with a small cast and simple set makes transportation easier and less expensive. (The cost of multiple rental vehicles to transport your set to various locations in the U.S. can mount up quickly.) But

there are no rules here. There have been many fine productions that have moved on to the National level with few set pieces and three actors or less. Equally fine productions with elaborate sets and large casts have gone the same route, thanks to determination and sufficient funding. In either case, focus on how you can put forth the highest quality production with the resources you know you can muster.

Once you have done your production planning, setting a specific financial goal is a next critical step. Do your homework to understand each of these costs in detail for the state, regional, and national AACTFests:

- Creating your production, licensing, sets, effects, etc.
- Getting the set, cast and crew to the festival—and back.

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- Festival entry and registration fees
- Food and lodging expenses

As Desiree Peters, Treasurer of California's Onstage Playhouse, points out, "While AACTFest is a fun, informative, and rewarding experience for the participants and sponsoring theatres, it is definitely an expensive venture and requires strong fundraising efforts." Fellow Californian Elaine Litton, co-founder of New Group West, emphasizes long-range planning: "We set our fundraising goal based on the estimated travel, hotel, shipping, and festival attendance costs. Since we know where Nationals will be held almost two years in advance, we can set our goal and select our show to fit accordingly."

### Funding Sources

Many theatres report funding opportunities with foundations, arts councils, and civic clubs. If there is no grant to apply for, sometimes a phone call or personal appeal to one of the aforementioned entities will produce a contribution — typically

after you've moved up a level of the festival cycle. For example, one company that made a call to a community foundation received a \$5,000 donation. In addition, AACT's Endowment Fund provides grants to theatre companies representing their regions, specifically to help offset travel expenses to the national festival.

It's rare to find 100% of your funding in such sources, however. They're really about closing the gaps in your fundraising, and in getting you started toward success.

**"We held two fundraising performances—one for the regional festival and one for the national."**

Below are tips gathered from successful AACTFest participants that can help you map out a strategic fundraising plan for moving from state to regional to national festivals.

### Written "Asks"

- "One successful letter writing campaign to our patrons offered them a way to take some ownership in their community theatre being in the national spotlight."
- "The fundraising committee wrote a donation solicitation letter and shared it with company members. They were then asked to share it via email with friends, family, and colleagues. The letter also was sent to our mailing list, and shared on Facebook and other social media sites."
- "Our president sent a personal letter to our theatre patrons, asking them to consider donating. We received several large donations and lots of small ones."

### Community Engagement

- "We solicited support from our donors with a 'buy-a-mile' campaign."
- "We had a graph on our website showing the fundraising progress."
- "We made a stage plea for support from our patrons, with the cast and crew holding buckets at the door."
- "Before the performance, announce a challenge to the audience, like 'We need to raise \$X at today's performance to pay for our traveling expenses to X Festival.'"
- "Ask a local business to help underwrite a specific cost, like shipping the set, travel, etc."
- "We had a giant poster in our lobby, reading 'Help Us Get to the Nationals' along with a fundraising 'thermometer' that we colored in red as the funds increased. That was a fun way for everyone to see our progress and we felt it inspired patrons to help."
- "The local newspaper gave us good coverage for winning at State and Regional levels and publicized our fundraising performances."

### Use the Show Itself

One popular fundraising method is to perform special benefit performances in various community venues or in your own space. (It's also great practice for setting up and striking your set.)

- "We did a dinner prior to [a performance of the AACTFest show] to raise money. The dinner was about an hour, and then an hour for the show, so it was a short evening. We did really well with that — had the food donated, and everyone loved it."

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- “I heard recently of a snazzy dinner hosted in a patron’s home. Folks paid \$50 for dinner and some time with the theatre group traveling to the festival.”
- “Each year we have a performance of the production before the Southeastern Theatre Conference Festival, usually including food and drink. This year we brought in some Lone Star beer from Texas for fun, had BBQ and other Texas fare to go along with the *Lone Star* feel.”
- “We asked for donations at a ‘pre-travel’ performance of our show, soliciting donations from our theater family to help defray costs.”
- “We held two fundraising performances — for the regional festival and one for the national. Admission was a donation of \$5 or more, and most people gave at least \$10 – and in some cases considerably more. In fact, we received a number of \$100 donations and a few that were greater than that.”
- “We did a series of public performances in different places, each with a ‘freewill’ donation.”
- “Put on additional performances at donated venues, and offer a talkback about the festival process and an opportunity to meet the cast.”
- “We produced a separate show for school audiences. The schools loved it and the income from those showings funded state travel expenses.”

See what AACTFest is all about on page 14

#### Getting Together

- “We partnered with the other winning company from our state, and performed both our shows for one weekend in our theatre. It was unique entertainment for our patrons, and the two companies split the proceeds. That put us over our goal.”
- “Our local regional theatre invited us to perform in their much larger space.”
- “Our theater and one across town were both invited to the state festival. We sold sponsorships for a joint T-Shirt, then sold the T-Shirts.”

#### Tried and True Strategies

- “We did a couple of fundraisers at local eateries, which donated 10% or 20% of sales when a special coupon was presented.”
- “At a regularly scheduled performance, we sold tickets for our nationals fundraising performance, and held a 50/50 raffle. We actually received more in direct donations for nationals at that production than we received from the 50/50 raffle” [where 50% of the total money collected is randomly awarded to one of the donors and the other 50% goes to the festival fundraising.]
- “We utilized Facebook to get the word out about our success and our fundraising needs. We also talked about winning at regionals and going to nationals in our newsletter.”
- Murder mystery dinners at a restaurant with a private room.
- Kickstarter [“the world’s largest funding platform for creative projects”].

- AmazonSmile [“automatically donates 0.5% of your purchases to the charity you select”]
- Benefit/Cabaret performances
- Raffles at performances.

#### Top Tips

- “We asked members of the company traveling to nationals to commit to do their best to fundraise \$1000 each. Where one member fell a little short, another would exceed the \$1000, thus filling the gap.”
- “Have each cast and crew member pledge to help raise a specific amount of money—for example, to cover the cost of individual travel or plane fare.”
- “I can’t emphasize enough to avoid bake sales, car washes, etc. Instead, work smarter on one or two major events.”
- “We solicited donations at every performance in our theater during the curtain speech.”
- “Produce a show that you *know* will make money specifically to fund travel to AACTFest. A financially

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successful production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* gave us the economic liberty to finally commit to taking the plunge.”

- “Going online to [gofundme.com](http://gofundme.com) was enormously useful for tracking who donated and how much, and also made the ‘thank-you’ process much easier to manage. Having a good email campaign message that our friends and fans could forward or post directly to their social media was a great tool.”
- “The single most critical piece (for an online campaign) was a Paypal ‘Donate Now’ button. The ability to donate immediately by simply clicking the button, instead of sending in a check brought results: More than 70% of our donations came in via Paypal.”
- “I emphasize that we have award-winning community theatre right here in our community. People like to support a person or organization they consider as a winner.”
- “It was obvious when we met our goal (and then some) that the relationships we had cultivated over 32 years with our patrons, the business community, and school systems, were key to our success. We invited all donors to one of our musicals and treated them to a dessert reception. The cast/crew and board of directors were all on hand to personally thank donors for their support.”

**“I would strongly encourage any group to go for it. The generosity of your community will amaze and humble you.”**

As these tips and success stories prove, there are many ways to fund your AACTFest adventure. In fact, most theatres use several different methods. Take a little inspiration from these folks and let their ideas and techniques help you take your show on the road. In

the words of The Burlington (MA) Players’ Rachel Fennell, “I would strongly encourage any group to go for it. The generosity of your community will amaze and humble you.” ♦

*The authors give special credit to Kristy Meanor, Executive Director, Wetumpka Depot Players in Wetumpka, Alabama, for sharing her article, “Community Festival Worth the Investment.”*

*Liz Lydic is an AACT Board member, and serves on the Festival Commission, Governance Committee, and the AACT Membership Team. She has worked in various administrative capacities at theatres nationwide, and currently serves as the bookkeeper at the Long Beach Playhouse (where she previously worked as the Business and Operations Manager). In California, Liz helped spearhead the California State Festival for the 2015 AACTFest cycle; hosted groups of individual Southern California AACT members for theatre events and outings; and just launched a resource website for CA Community Theatres: [californiacommunitytheatre.org](http://californiacommunitytheatre.org). Liz works for the City of Hermosa Beach, and lives in the South Bay area of Los Angeles with her actor/theatre educator husband, Stephen, and their daughter, Ramona.*

*Gil Savage started in Community Theatre in his teens during the 60s, at the Globe Theatre in San Diego. He holds a BFA degree in Theater Arts from AIU in San Diego and has studied at the Actor’s Studio in Los Angeles. He has worked professionally as an actor, stage manager, director, playwright, filmmaker, and acting teacher. He co-founded the Actors Video Workshop in California and the Omni Theater in New York. Gil has been an AACT Board Member as the Region VIII representative since 2008.*



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## AACT Youth Summit at AACTFest 2015

By Bailey Ford

Fourteen young people, from all across the nation, came together to share in the one thing they love: theatre. When I walked into the Amway Grand Hotel on June 24th, I found myself in a flurry of excitement. We were handed a schedule full of activities for us to participate in, including workshops, master classes, and of course, lots of shows. About an hour after arriving, we walked to the room where our main event would take place. There was a circle of chairs and we

**We were all very aware that we had the opportunity to shape this program for future generations.**

all introduced ourselves to the group. That day, we also got a tour of the hotel and then we walked over to the Grand Rapids Civic Theatre. On the walk over, everyone started talking about their favorite cast albums to listen to, what shows were in the line-up for the upcoming season at their theatres, and their dream roles. Each person was so passionate and proud of their hometown community theatre.

*continued on next page*



*Students of the Youth Summit sharing their passion for theatre on the walk to Grand Rapids Civic Theatre.*

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On day two, we got to formally share information about our individual theatres. Each theatre was radically different. It was eye-opening to hear how youth programs worked at each theatre. Some students shared struggles that their theatre faced. Often, other students had stories to share about how their theatre overcame a hardship that someone else's theatre was experiencing. Ava Brewer



Ava Brewer, Shelby Davis, Hannah Derby, Serenity Dunn, Bailey Ford, Paige Harken, Lowell Irby, Kennedy Mullens, Albie Nicol, Trinity Posey, Nadine Rewa, Paige Smith, Genevieve Wisdom, and Harrison Woodworth attend the AACT Youth Summit at AACTFest 2015 in Grand Rapids

from All-of-Us Express Children's Theatre of East Lansing, Michigan, shared some insight about her experiences at the Youth Summit, "I loved hearing about all of the different ways our companies were different and how they had solved problems that maybe our theatre has." We also discussed what we wanted to see the Youth Summit become. One of the most exhilarating things about the whole experience was the fact that we were the very first group of students to participate in AACTFest's Youth Summit. We were all very aware that we had the opportunity to shape this program for future

*"I see the Youth Summit becoming something that teenagers all around can't wait for. Something that gets other teenagers involved in theatre."*

generations. Albie Nicol, a representative for Waterloo Community Playhouse and Blackhawk Children's Theatre in Cedar Falls, Iowa, said that her favorite part of the Youth Summit was, "helping shape the future for other youth like us in the AACT community." We were on the frontier of a unique program that had the potential to become something outstanding. Serenity Dunn, a participant from Playhouse in the Park in Murray, Kentucky, shared her exciting vision, "In the future, I see the Youth Summit becoming something that teenagers all around can't wait for. Something that gets other teenagers involved in theatre." Day two was my favorite day, because of all of

the knowledge I gained. As I walked out that day, I just had to stop and really think about how amazing it was that we had been given the chance to gain valuable knowledge about how to improve our beloved community theatres. How incredible that fourteen youth from all over the country could come together to brainstorm and create for the love of theatre.

The third day was all about appreciating Grand Rapids Civic Theatre. We had a wonderful tour guide who gave us a grand tour of the beautiful theatre. Trinity Posey, a representative from Kalamazoo Civic Theatre in Kalamazoo, Michigan said, "It was so cool to see another community's theatre and learn all of the interesting facts about it." This was the perfect way to end the Summit, all of us in awe of the rich theatrical history that was evident all around us. The costume archive was a colorful array of fabric, with bright costumes stored from the floor to the ceiling. We also got a tour of the area where they store props. It was like being inside a time capsule; there were rows and rows of shelves, each one filled with props, each prop having a history of its own. Surrounded by this history, I felt an overwhelming feeling that we could create our own history, that the future of our local theatres was in our hands, which is such a thrilling thought. I could not wait to get home to my own theatre, Kalamazoo Civic Theatre, and share what I had learned. ♦

*Bailey Ford lives in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where she has been active in many productions at local theatres including Kalamazoo Civic Theatre and Farmers Alley. She is a senior in high school and hopes to attend college for musical theatre or arts management.*

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# AACT NewPlayFest

The 2016 AACT NewPlayFest cycle began with the world premiere production of **Lighthouse** by William Baer at the Windsor Community Playhouse September 25 - October 10, 2015.

Playwright William Baer said, "Seeing *Lighthouse* produced at the Windsor Community Playhouse was a wonderful experience! I'm extremely grateful to AACT and the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation for making everything possible and to the play's director Tim Bernhardt and his excellent cast and crew. It was also exciting to have Julie Crawford, AACT executive director, Linda Lee, director of the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation, and Linda Habjan of Dramatic Publishing all present for opening night. The NewPlayFest is every playwright's dream!"



Each Producing Theatre receives \$4000 to help cover the production and marketing costs of the show. This generous funding is provided by the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation.

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](http://dramaticpublishing.com)) and licensing rights are available through Dramatic Publishing.

## Schedule now to become an AACT NewPlayFest 2018 Producing Theatre

The theatre that produces a new play brings a brand new adventure to its company and its patrons. The world premiere of an award winning show is a feather in a theatre's cap!

Applications to be a producing theatre for AACT NewPlayFest 2018 are due by March 31, 2016. For application form go to [www.aact.org/newplayfest](http://www.aact.org/newplayfest) or contact the AACT office.

## 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).

## Be a Reviewer for AACT NewPlayFest 2018

Individuals are asked to volunteer to read and score the scripts. Each script will be evaluated by at least three Reviewers. Those that rise to the top will be read by an additional set of Reviewers. Their scores will determine the finalists. Apply now to be an AACT NewPlayFest 2018 Reviewer at [aact.org/aact-newplayfest-reviewers](http://aact.org/aact-newplayfest-reviewers).

Producing a new play is an exciting process! Think seriously about participating in AACT NewPlayFest 2018! ♦

Producing theatres have scheduled AACT NewPlayFest productions for 2016. The 2016 AACT NewPlayFest calendar includes:

**Laguna Beach, Ohio** by Malcolm MacDonald  
Stage Right Productions/2<sup>nd</sup> Street Theatre, Bend, OR  
March 25 - April 9  
[2ndstreettheatre.com](http://2ndstreettheatre.com)

**Wash, Dry, Fold** by Nedra Pezold Roberts  
Chicago Street Theatre/Community Theatre Guild, Valparaiso, IN  
May 20 - June 4  
[chicagostreet.org](http://chicagostreet.org)

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

**Get Out of Dodge** by Jeanne Drennan  
Venice Theatre, Venice, FL  
November  
[venicestage.com](http://venicestage.com)

**The Emperor of North America** by Thomas Hischak  
Silver Spring Stage, Silver Spring, MD  
September  
[ssstage.org](http://ssstage.org)

**Shades of Valor** by Karen L. Lewis  
Twin City Stage, Winston-Salem, NC  
TBA  
[twincitystage.org](http://twincitystage.org)

## Three One-Act Plays About the Elderly by Elyse Nass

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## Avenue of Dream A One-Act Play by Elyse Nass

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The Hollywood Reporter

*"...gives every detail an importance  
and echo of its own."*

Los Angeles Times

Dramatists Play Service [www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com)

## Meet the AACT Staff



Back row (l-r) Cran Dodds, Ron Ziegler, Winston Daniels, Karen Matheny  
Front Row (l-r) Jill Patchin, Julie Crawford, David Cockerell, Darlene DeLorenzo

Photo by Linda M. Lee

**Julie Crawford**, Executive Director

[julie@aacr.org](mailto:julie@aacr.org)

Ask Julie about all things AACT - especially AACT leadership, committees, programs, educational events, awards, finances, and planning.

**David Cockerell**, Marketing/ Communications Director

[david@aacr.org](mailto:david@aacr.org)

David handles communications with members, including e-news and promos; edits *Spotlight*; promotes AACT programs; and works to increase AACT visibility.

**Cranston Dodds**, Member Engagement Director

[cran@aacr.org](mailto:cran@aacr.org)

Ask Cranston how to engage with AACT programs and benefits, and connect to the national network of America's theatres and theatre lovers.

**Karen Matheny**, Office Support Manager

[karen@aacr.org](mailto:karen@aacr.org)

Karen fields any questions you may have and handles membership processing, event registrations, and managing the AACT office.

**Darlene DeLorenzo**, Vendor Services Coordinator

[darlene@aacr.org](mailto:darlene@aacr.org)

Ask Darlene about *Spotlight* advertising, renting the mailing list, and Corporate Partners.

**Jill Patchin**, Conference and Sponsorships Coordinator

[jill@aacr.org](mailto:jill@aacr.org)

Jill recruits AACT sponsors and handles arrangements for AACT events. Like Ron, she's a past AACT President, with knowledge and expertise to spare.

**Ron Ziegler**, Festivals Coordinator

[ron@aacr.org](mailto:ron@aacr.org)

Ask Ron about AACT's festival program and state/regional festivals. A former AACT President, he has years of experience at all levels of community theatre.

**Winston Daniels**, Office Assistant

[winston@aacr.org](mailto:winston@aacr.org)

Winston works with membership & registration processing, data entry, mailings, etc.

**Stephen Peithman**, Webmaster, not pictured

[webmaster@aacr.org](mailto:webmaster@aacr.org)

Stephen handles all things relating to the AACT website.

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# Announcing AACT 2016 Team Conference

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Des Moines, IA  
Hosted by Des Moines Community Playhouse

Theatre is a collaborative event; it takes a team of people with various skills to pull it off.

One of the best things you can do for yourself and your theatre is to increase the knowledge and skills you bring to your theatre position. A theatre's human resources is its most valuable asset and it is wise to encourage, even assist, volunteers and staff in attending workshops and conferences. AACT's mission is to help make that happen. AACT is offering an expanded educational conference this year, with four tracks focusing on technical theatre, theatre education programs, artistic direction of a theatre, and development and marketing.

## Technical Theatre Skills

The Technical Theatre Skills track is for those who work behind the scenes and want to learn more. You will learn hands-on from experts in three core areas, which will be based on participants' needs, but are tentatively planned to be sound, lights, and set construction. This conference will help you find resources and

supplies you can utilize in your theatre, increase your excitement in the magic of technical theatre, and provide you with a nationwide network of fellow techies!

No technical theatre training is required, but even experienced techies will benefit.

## Educational Programing Directors

Boost your theatre's education program, exchange ideas and experiences, and learn skills to better manage your programs.

The Educational Programing Directors track will give you skills to tackle theatre education issues, a renewed enthusiasm to build your educational programs, and provide you 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.

Directing the Theatre's Artistic Vision track will help you discover and re-envision exciting ways to produce high quality theatre as you

*continued on next page*

Our AACT membership is one of our most important resources, from the amazing membership benefits to their helpful user-friendly website. I have attended an AACT conference each year since 2010 and I always come back with a bagful of new, practical, real-world ideas that I can implement right away, not to mention a re-charged battery and love for what we do! My folder of "AACT Conference Notes" is something I reach for several times a year and I always find just what I need.

**Lisa Cope, Executive Director, Playhouse in the Park, Murray, KY**



## 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  
Hilarious comedy about seniors seeking revenge! The residents of the Sunshine Retirement Village have had enough; they're revolting! Bursting with eccentric characters and crazy shenanigans the play is great fun to stage and a huge audience pleaser.

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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.

The Development/Marketing Skills track will help you 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.

Watch [aact.org](http://aact.org) for details!

**C**ome 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. ♦

For more information contact the AACT office 817-732-3177 or [info@aact.org](mailto:info@aact.org).



Our theatre originally joined AACT due to the tremendous savings on Music Theatre International rentals (we saved MORE than our Membership dues that first year!)

**Susan Goes**  
Executive Director,  
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# How to Keep Youth Involved in Community Theatre

By Kathy Pingel

Five years ago, a panel of college instructors addressed our theatre's summer musical kids. Their advice for those serious about applying to top-notch theatre programs was to "assemble a powerful portfolio." We had offered students the chance to work tech, assist teachers, and even stage manage, but how were we different from other theatres? What would make students' portfolios "powerful"?



Ralph (Sam Billingsley) challenges Jack (Danny Williams)'s throne in *Adolescent Anarchy's* inaugural production, *The Lord of the Flies*, at Des Moines Community Playhouse. Photo by Travis Reinders, Directed by Sam Bates-Norum and Halen Becker; Designed by Connor Bredbeck & Tommy Anderson (Set), Madi Delk (costumes) and Claire Guderjahn (lights).

Nine teenagers were hand-picked. These students demonstrated an interest in a variety of theatre activities, were reliable volunteers, and wanted to pursue arts in college. They formed a teen-production team, responsible for one fully-realized production a year. Our theatre would provide lights and rights, but everything else including fund raising and publicity were theirs. They named themselves Adolescent Anarchy. They were and are fierce, dedicated, argumentative, unruly, and bold. In successive years they produced *Lord of the Flies*, [title of show], and *Big Fish*. They founded an improv group, an acappella choir, and have written an original two-act script. To date they have raised over \$20,000 and the group continues to thrive.

The original members are now in college or are headed there soon. I asked them the question: What qualities should a theatre program have to attract and motivate teens?

**Sam Bates-Norum** (University of Minnesota) Being a teen in theatre kinda sucks. Too old for this role, and too young for that role. If opportunities are lacking, teens will walk away.

**Meredith Toebben** (University of Nebraska) Generally, teens are trusted with less because we're younger and thought to be unreliable, but theatres need to understand the type of teen they're going to attract. They're smart, committed, and ready to work. However, they don't want to be a piece of machinery. They want to impact the project.

**Elsa Klein** (Freshman, University of St. Andrew's, Scotland) A

teen's participation in theatre is rooted in a desperate search for a place that makes sense, a world that coincides with the world in our heads—one that we want to both create and control.

**Travis Reinders** (University of Southern California) The most important aspect of any program is ownership. I felt like if my voice was heard, if I was respected as a peer, then the project belonged to me.

**Claire Guderjahn** (University of Northern Iowa) Teens want to have an impact while showcasing individual creativity.

**Connor Bredbeck** (DePaul University, Chicago) An artist's age is not an indication of the quality or sincerity of their passion.

**Samuel Maude** (Dowling High School, Des Moines) Teens want to make a lasting difference.

**Madison Delk** (DePaul University, Chicago) A teen needs to have meaningful, hands-on experiences in their field in order to compete in the admissions process.

**Halen Becker** (Drake University, Des Moines) The most valuable part of my teen theatre program was the opportunity to take on different jobs onstage and backstage.

**Elsa.** Teens have a valuable, specific and often unvoiced perspective on what the world is and what "society" means.

**Samuel.** Offer the chance to perform a socially relevant show.

**Travis.** Let them try the ideas they've been building up over the years.

**Halen.** They should be encouraged to try something they've never done before. Because I was encouraged to explore outside of acting, I'm in an entirely different field than I had imagined.



Edward (Bob Filippone) and Sandra Bloom (Sarah Bodle) share a kiss amidst the daffodils in *Big Fish*, presented by Adolescent Anarchy and DM Young Artists' Theatre at Viking Theater; Directed by Claire Guderjahn, Designed by Noah Dorsett (set), Anna Neal (costumes) and Samuel Maude (lights).



The world premiere staged reading of *Equinox* by Connor Bredbeck and Elsa Klein, directed by Madison Delk. From left: Sam Bates-Norum, Dave Williams, Jodi Stanfield, Melissa Chavas, Spencer Gilbert (back).

**Sam.** A program or project started with hesitancy or doubt will fail. Teens need unwavering support.

**Meredith.** If teens are volunteering in your classrooms, let them teach.

**Claire.** They need to experiment and find their own artistic view.

**Connor.** Give students a chance to fully produce a theatre piece, host classes, stage readings—anything that will let them learn their craft. Create a student board tasked with selecting shows, fundraising, and advising about programming. Provide them with

their own space.

**Madison.** Does your theatre program allow for experiences to expand skills like collaboration, problem-solving, and articulating a vision?

**Elsa.** Teenagers need to know why they are important as teenagers. They have a unique point of view and theatre is the place to showcase it.

**Sam.** Teens should connect with and learn from mentors in the theatre.

**Meredith.** Responsibility is pivotal because once that is placed on young adults they have motivation to follow through and an invitation to come back for more.

**Samuel.** Changing lives and making a difference, whether it is bringing joy and magic to a child or shining light on an important social issue, is worth it.

**Halen.** In short, the key is freedom.

**Travis.** If you give them a chance to show you, you'll see a lot of things no one else could do. ♦

*Note: Adolescent Anarchy was founded at The Des Moines Community Playhouse in 2012 and moved to Des Moines Young Artists in 2014.*

*Kathy Pingel has served as the Director of Education and Youth Programming at the Des Moines Community Playhouse and as Artistic Director of the Kate Goldman Children's Theatre. Prior to those positions she taught at New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois and Southern Illinois University. She retired in 2014. She holds a BA in theatre from Eastern Michigan University, a MA from Northwestern University in Performance Studies, and a MAT in teaching from Northwestern.*



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In order to make its shows accessible to all performers, Tams-Witmark has developed Young Performers' Editions of *The Wizard of Oz*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Crazy For You*, and *Anything Goes*. Soon to be released is a high school version of *A Chorus Line*, with more titles to follow.

Tams-Witmark also has developed a stage version of the classic TV special, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, which has quickly become one of the most popular holiday musicals. *Nice Work If You Can Get*

*It*, one of the Library's newer shows, has become a favorite among community theatres.

Whenever possible, Tams-Witmark makes available the latest versions of its shows. These include revival versions of *Cabaret* and *Kiss Me, Kate*, and soon to be released revival versions of *Promises, Promises* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

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Other popular shows include the musicals *The Honky Tonk Angels* and *The Honky Tonk Angels Holiday Spectacular*, and the plays, *Stories My Grandmother Told Me* and *A Southern Belle Primer (or Why Princess Margaret Could Never Be A Kappa Kappa Gamma)*—the latter based on the best-selling, cult-classic book of the same title.

The company is "dedicated to developing and licensing small cast musicals and plays that are easy to produce. Friendly, personalized service and an eclectic mix of plays and musicals await you for audience-pleasing theatrical hits."

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Having the opportunity to be a guest speaker at this year's AACTFest was not only an honor but also a chance to thank the many participants for supporting all of my *Nonsense* shows. The community theatres of the country are of vital importance not only to the arts but also to the many writers who use the royalties to continue writing. I am personally grateful for all of the actors, directors, and volunteers who help make community theatre thrive. And I'm happy to be able to participate in the wonderful work of AACT.

**Dan Goggin, Playwright**  
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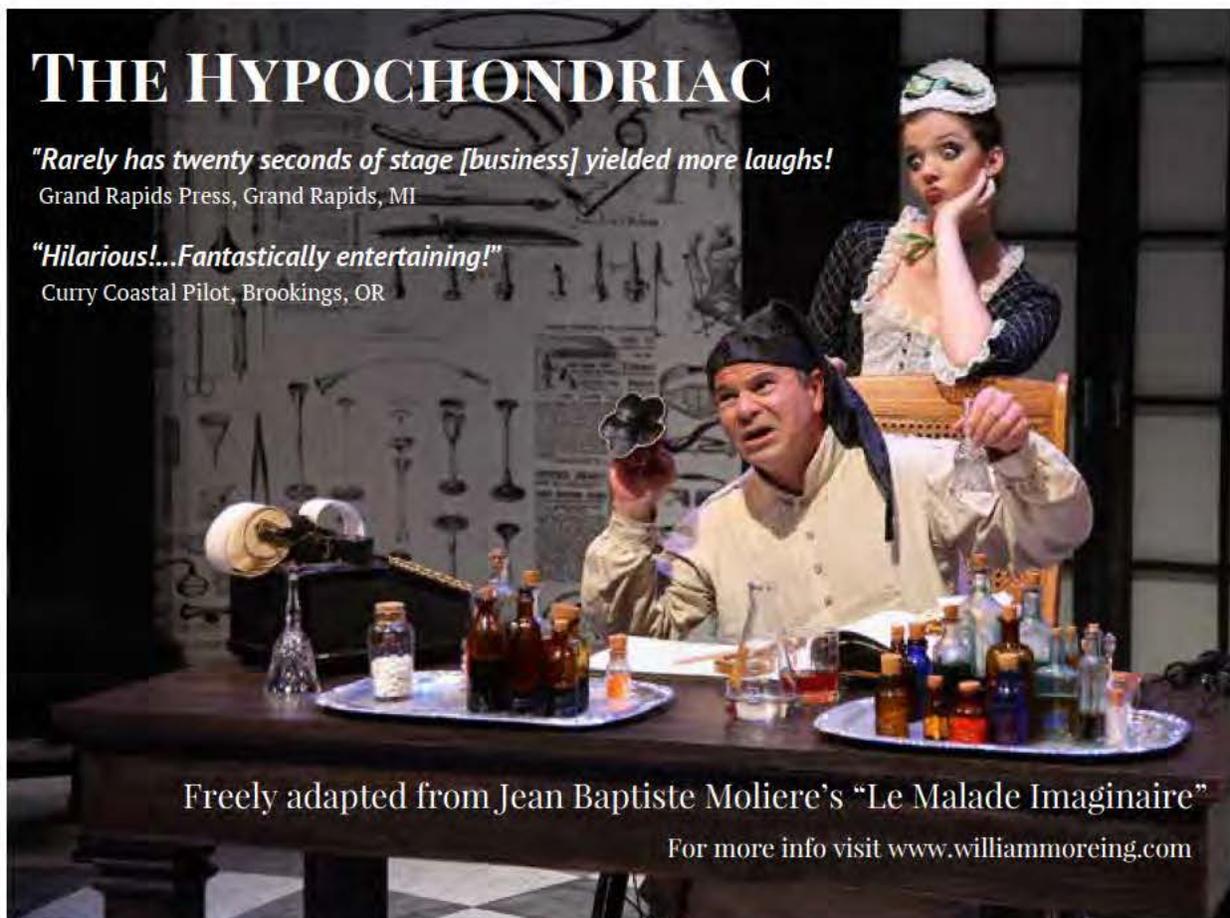
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See more at: [arts.gov](http://arts.gov).



## What's Trending: Volunteers

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.

**V**olunteers was the subject of a Trends survey distributed in early November. Responses were received from 103 theatres in 37 states, a U.S. military base in Belgium, and a theatre in Rosarito, Baja California, Mexico.

Theatres completing the Trends survey have an average of 211 volunteers with half of them having 100 or less. The smallest number reported was 6 and the largest, 1,200. For 41.6% of theatres the number of volunteers has increased; 47.5% of theatres reported little change in the past two years.

### Training for volunteers is becoming important to more theatres

**T**he average age of volunteers has stayed about the same for 59% of theatres, with 25% reporting the average age has gotten younger. The Music Theatre of Wenatchee (WA) has a strategy for getting new volunteers involved. "We open up opportunities to new people all the time and don't allow long-serving volunteers to become entrenched in their positions. This allows for an overall younger volunteer base." The average number of years a volunteer serves has increased for 30.3% of theatres responding; 55.6% said the number of years has not changed much.

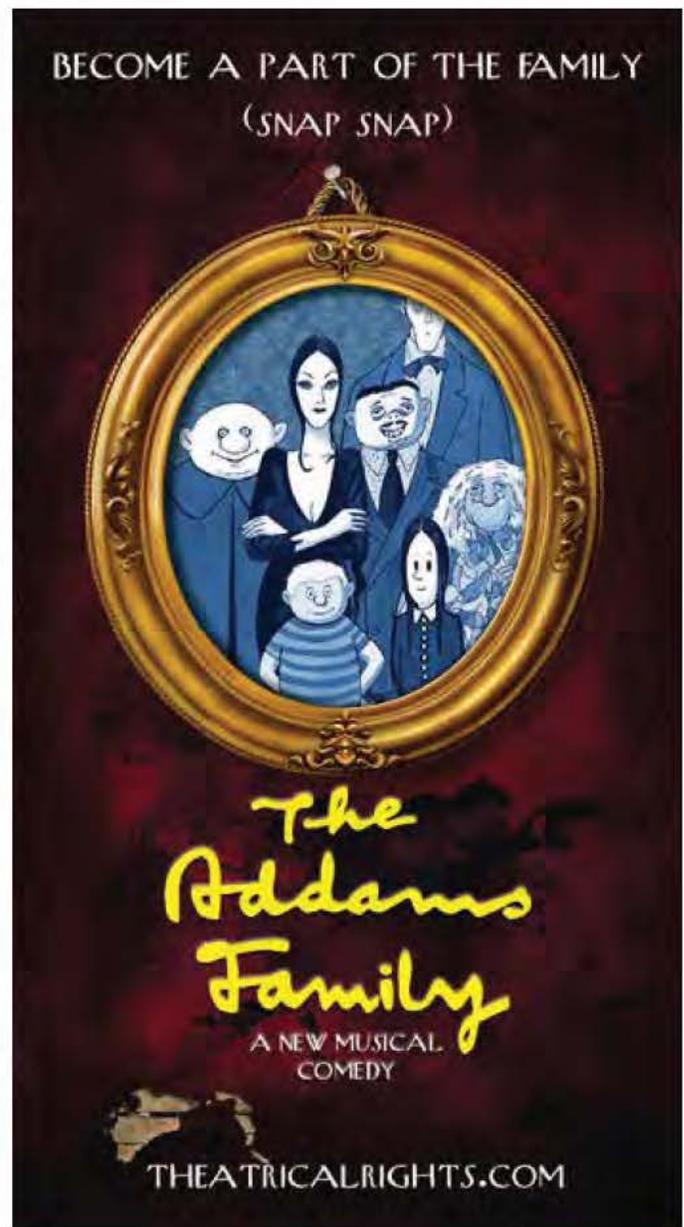
**T**raining for volunteers is becoming important to more theatres with 39% reporting the training they provide has increased; 55% have not changed the amount. Light and sound board training is provided by 77.2% of the theatres. The use of power

tools is taught by 40.6% of theatres. 12.9% of theatres wrote in other scenic and design skills. Costuming or sewing was written in by 17.8% of theatres and 9.9% wrote in props or prop design.

Three-fourths offer training in acting. Directing is taught by 5% of theatres. Stage Management training is provided by 71.3%. Stage crew skills were written in by 7.9% of theatres.

Box Office training is provided by 72.3% of theatres. 20.8% wrote in other front of house skills, including ushering, greeting, concessions, bar tending, and house management. Training in fundraising is provided by 19.8% of theatres.

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Procedures for volunteer placement and/or specific jobs have stayed about the same for 60.2% of theatres and have increased for over a third of theatres (35.7%). The Grosse Pointe (MI) Theatre observes, "Communication has moved to electronic and social media, so manuals, procedures and job descriptions seem to be less utilized because it takes too much time to read them. Training and information must be 'modernized' if we want younger volunteers to absorb it."

## Every theatre finds ways to thank and recognize volunteers.

Background checks on volunteers are not important for most community theatres; 47.5% of theatres do not conduct them. However, 22.8% conduct them on volunteers who work with children and 21.8% are considering using background checks.

Filling volunteer positions has become more difficult for 39% of theatres, with 47% saying recruitment is about the same. However, 56.4% said it is more difficult to find volunteers with specific skills. The survey asked about the positions of Technical Crew (difficult to find for 69.3%), Carpenters (41.6%), Designers (32.7%), Stage Managers (31.7%), Marketing/PR (30.7%), and Accounting/Bookkeeping (15.8%). Box Office and other front of house positions were written in by 6.9% of theatres responding.

The survey asked theatres what they provide to make it easier for a person to volunteer. Free parking is provided by 54.5% of theatres; 51.5% provide food for those volunteering. Travel assistance, such as gas or bus money, is provided by 5.9% and 5% provide babysitting or make it available onsite.

Every theatre responding finds ways to thank and recognize volunteers. Free show tickets are given by 78.2% of theatres. Program credit is important for 75.2% of theatres. "Facebook sightings" or photos on other social media was mentioned by 3% of theatres. The Grosse Pointe (MI) Theatre gives a show photo that includes crew.

Parties are big for 62.38% of theatres. The Venice (FL) Theatre throws an annual volunteer appreciation party with "Awards, open bar, dinner, and music. Prizes. If a volunteer has given 500 or more hours they are put in a drawing to win a trip for two to NYC."

Thank you notes are sent by 59.4%. Saying "thank you" in person was written in by 4% of theatres. Wheaton (IL) Drama, Inc. likes to "thank them seven times - in person."

Awards recognize volunteers in 44.6% of theatres. The Little Theatre of Owatonna (MN) has a Hall of Fame, "we recognize a certain number of volunteers every five years on the anniversary years." The Venice (FL) Theatre recognizes volunteer service with volunteer year pins after five years of volunteering. T-shirts are a thank you recognition for 20.8% of theatres. Food or small gifts, such as treats, are ways of showing appreciation for 5% of theatres. The St. George (UT) Musical Theater gives end of show gift baskets.

Several theatres told of unusual ways they thank or recognize volunteers. Free use of the space for an event is provided by the Reno (NV) Little Theater. "We do a small monetary stipend for the most

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time consuming and difficult to fill positions,” said the Music Theatre of Wenatchee (WA). Center Stage Theatre - Midland (MI) Center for the Arts shared, “Inviting them to leadership positions within our advisory committees... Most people seem extremely honored to be asked....” From the Spokane (WA) Civic Theatre, “We give them ‘Civic’ dollars to spend at the theatre - concessions, tickets, etc. - by far the most popular thing.”

The survey’s last question was “Have you observed any other recent changes in working with volunteers?” Scheduling conflicts and long term commitments were the most often mentioned. From Theatre Cedar Rapids (IA), “Schedule conflicts appears to be a growing issue.” “People are so busy they can’t seem to fit in all their activities,” according to the Habersham Community Theater in Clarkesville, GA. The Robidoux Resident Theatre in St. Joseph, MO said, “Recently, we’ve had a bit of a problem with audition numbers.” At the Kalamazoo (MI) Civic Theatre. “The length of time volunteers are able to give has changed. So a 6-10 week rehearsal and performance process can be difficult for folks to commit.”

The Webster City (IA) Community Theatre summed up the volunteer experience very well, “Creating awareness of how volunteers can help and appreciating them taking their time to share their talents and skills encourages them to return another time. A congenial group allows people to have fun while they work.” ♦

Next up in “What’s Trending” is personnel, paid and volunteer. Who handles the day-to-day operations of your theatre? Who coordinates productions? Who handles publicity? Check it out in the March-April 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.



The many discounts more than pay for our theatre’s membership each year, but the TRUE GEM resource for me is the power of collective knowledge. Being a part of a community of community theatres where any challenge you encounter has an accessible answer by friends who have already lived through it.

**Rick Kirby, Artistic Director**  
Manatee Players, Bradenton, FL

## Make A Legacy Gift

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)

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# North to Canada This Summer, or “Get Thee to a Nunnery!”

By Roger Ellis

Everyone probably recognizes that famous passage from *Hamlet*, but it seems appropriate to call it to mind at this time of year when our thoughts might be turning to the months ahead, and especially to summer. Why Shakespeare? Because the troupe chosen to represent the U.S.A. this coming summer at the World Festival of Children’s Theatre in Stratford, Canada, is a theatre company from Palisades, New York, known for their outstanding productions of the Bard’s plays: the Children’s Shakespeare Theatre.

This World Festival of Children’s Theatre gives AACT members an excellent opportunity to experience and enjoy a large and exciting international Festival right on our doorstep. From June 5 - 14, Stratford, Ontario will host up to 500 children from 22 nations, ages 7 - 15, in a theatre festival unlike any other. And this international children’s festival will take place concurrently with the well-known Stratford Festival that has been producing world-famous Shakespeare, musicals, and dramas in Canada since 1953.



The cast of Scapino at the Children’s Shakespeare Theatre

AACT theatres in the northeast and upper Midwest (Regions I, II, III) will likely find it very convenient to travel to Stratford, Ontario. From where I write in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Stratford is a pleasant six-hour drive. Individuals as well as groups should consider making the trip for at least a few days in support of this worldwide amateur

continued on page 39

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David Schwab

AACT Festivals Coordinator Ron Ziegler (left) presents the 2015 David C. Bryant Outstanding Service Award to former Region X Representative Vikki Hanrahan from Terrace Playhouse in Ansbach, Germany. The presentation took place at the IMCOM-E One Page Play & Showcase Festival and Theater Skills Workshops in Region X, October 9-11, 2015. Region Representative Dane Winters looks on.



Lois Chase

AACT Life Member and Broadway luminary Ben Vereen poses with AACT President Murray Chase at Venice (FL) Theatre's 65 Anniversary Gala, November 9, 2015. Ben directed Hair for the theatre, and was on hand for the event, which was also final preview for the show.



Bevie Lord

AACT Executive Director Julie Crawford (second from right) and Warner Stage Company (Torrington, CT) Production Manager Sharon Wilcox (right) pose with attendees of the Careers in Community Theatre workshop, held at the New England Theatre Conference Convention. The event took place October 24-26, 2015 in Westford, MA.



Linda Lee

The AACT Staff assembled at the AACT offices in Fort Worth, TX for a staff retreat, October 27-29, 2015. Pictured clockwise from left are Festivals Coordinator Ron Ziegler, Vendor Services Coordinator Darlene DeLorenzo, Office Support Manager Karen Matheny, Executive Director Julie Crawford, Office Assistant Winston Daniels, Conference and Sponsorships Coordinator Jill Patchin, Marketing/Communications Director David Cockerell, and Member Engagement Director Cran Dodds.

More On the Road on page 40

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theatre event, and to support the Children's Shakespeare Theatre in particular.

Those of us who do attend will certainly have our eyes opened by experiencing world children's theatre from many cultural traditions. There are young people's performances, workshops, roundtables & symposia on directing for children's theatre, field trips into the Stratford region, and social events to extend your contacts globally. As an AACT member, or education director at one of our member theatres, you're sure to have a wonderful time and learn a great deal. And if you bring a group of your theatre-interested young people to Stratford, they'll quickly form lasting friendships with youngsters from other lands, most of whom speak English!

"Some of the most imaginative staging occurs at international Festivals," remarks Ron Cameron-Lewis, a long-standing AACT member from Ontario. "You see things that go beyond what is customary and 'comfortable' in your own local community theatres." Ron has travelled and brought his own adult shows to international festivals over the years, and has adjudicated a number of AACT festivals here in the United States. Perhaps you were able to catch his production of *Babel Rap* that Ron brought to our last international festival, AACT WorldFest 2014, in Venice, Florida.

Last summer here in Grand Rapids he pointed out to me, "This applies not only to movement techniques and stage blocking but also

to the technical areas of set design, sound effects, musical choices, projections, costuming, hair and makeup, and special effects."

The educational experience for members of your own theatre can also be invaluable, Ron mentioned: "International Festivals can be a place to discover or upgrade best practices in theatre, because peripheral activities address issues like fundraising, education from around the world, the adjudication process, workshops in a wide range of international styles, and networking on a very sophisticated level. When we return home from travel, we see our own country differently, having experienced the cultural views of other countries; likewise, when we see international theatre, we see our own theatre-related choices with new eyes."



Much Ado About Nothing at the Children's Shakespeare Theatre

So plan a road trip or a short flight to Stratford, Ontario in June for this huge

and exciting world festival. You can investigate the work of the Children's Shakespeare Theatre at their fabulous website: [childrensshakespeare.org](http://childrensshakespeare.org). Or see some of their work on Youtube: [youtube.com/watch?v=NU1TwqJsqw8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NU1TwqJsqw8). And if you're looking for information about Stratford's World Festival for your group, visit [worldfestivalofchildrenstheatre.com](http://worldfestivalofchildrenstheatre.com).

*Roger Ellis has been a member of AACT's International Committee for the past five years, and served as Vice-President of the International Amateur Theatre Association from 2013 - 2015.*

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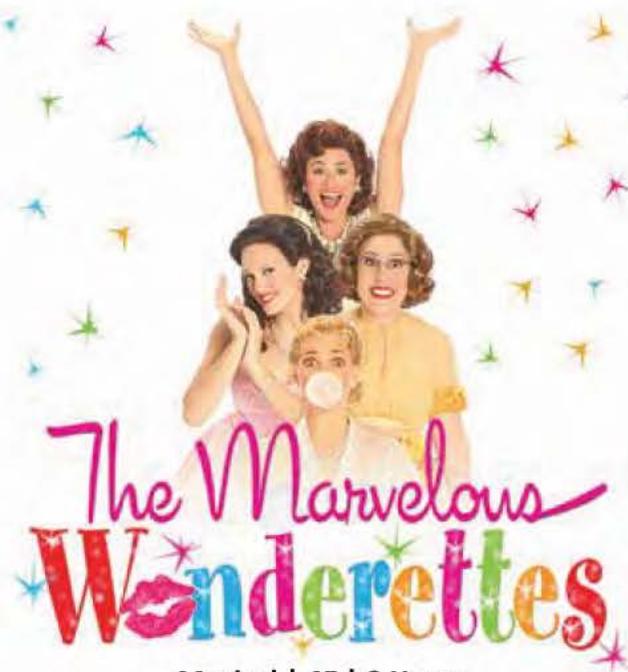
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- MODEL BEHAVIOR by benjamin klingemann
- THE REAPER by taegan payne
- TODD AND BECKY by phil olson
- TRAPPED by scott haan

Ron Ziegler



AACT Region IX Representative Jon Douglas Rake (foreground) participates in the beginning session of the National Community Theatre Managing Directors' Conference as one of the assembled community theatre professionals from around the country. The biennial conference took place at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, November 21-24, 2015.



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David Cockerell

AACT Marketing & Communications Director David Cockerell (right) visits with American for the Arts President and CEO Robert L. Lynch at the National Arts Marketing Group Project Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, November 6-9, 2015.

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### The Casualty of Cupid's Arrow

by David Dietz



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Appealing to a diverse and contemporary audience, this show will be enjoyed by kids younger than 5 and will certainly be enjoyed by adults because of its sophisticated POV and the beloved sound. Parents will enjoy the story, message and edgy humor. In addition, there is a dedicated audience in the fans of book author Christopher Paul Curtis.

*Mr. Chickee's Funny Money* follows 10-year-old Steven, a self-proclaimed spy and president of the Flint Future Detectives Club. At the heart of this whimsical journey is an intelligent, entrepreneurial boy who is asked to unlock the secret behind a mysterious bill. With his pals (and their giant flying dog, Zoopy), Steven discovers that family, friends, imagination and determination are the true keys to success and sharing the spotlight with others can make one even richer. This all new rhythm and blues musical grooves to original songs by Motown legend Lamont Dozier with additional music and lyrics by his son, Paris Dozier.



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## New Roles

Cedar Rapids, IA – **Kyle Leineweber** has been named Technical Director for **Theatre Cedar Rapids**. Kyle received a BFA from Point Park University in Pittsburgh, PA specializing in Technical production. Kyle also received an MFA in Technical Theatre and Design from Northern Illinois University in Dekalb, IL. The Staff and Board are thrilled to welcome Kyle and his tremendous talents to the community. Congratulations, Kyle!

Springfield, KY - **Central Kentucky Community Theatre** (CKCT) is proud to announce **Mark L. Colbenson** as its new Managing Artistic Director. Mark comes to CKCT with over 40 years of experience as an administrator, actor, director, and designer. Prior to his appointment in Kentucky, Mark served as Managing Director of the Rochester (MN) Civic Theatre, co-founder of Long Lake Theatre in Park Rapids, MN, and Artistic Director for the Richmond Community Theatre in Rockingham, NC. Mark will lead CKCT as a business expert as well as oversee the artistic vision and excellence of Central Kentucky Community Theatre. Congratulations, Mark!



The Sense of Community truly lives at AACT. We are a community of people dedicated to bringing theatre alive to our audiences, and with AACT's help and resources, we do it better than ever. The discounts help our budget, the conferences build our knowledge base and our confidence, and the people make AACT a great community.

**Walter Hurst, Director of the Norris Theatre**  
Louisburg College, Louisburg, NC



The Educational Conferences offered by AACT are top notch. The Artistic Director's Conference included TONS of useful and practical ideas. Attending two AACTFest National Festivals that included world class performances has inspired me as a director and an artist.

**Lisa Garza**  
**Houston Family Arts Center**  
Houston, TX

Muncie, IN – **Muncie Civic Theatre** is proud to announce **Sarah Jenkins** as the new Executive Director for this exciting theatre. Before accepting this position, Sarah served as Development Director for Muncie Civic and also Development Director for Ball State University. She has an MBA in Arts Administration and a Bachelor's degree in Dance performance, both from Illinois State University. Sarah is passionate about Muncie Civic's mission to enhance the whole community through theatre performance, education, and outreach. She is looking forward to increasing Muncie Civic's role as a vital arts partner in Downtown Muncie and to maintaining the theatre's home, the historic Boyce Block building. AACT wishes Sarah the very best! ♦



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## Can This Marriage be Saved?

by Twink Lynch

How terrible and final the words, “You’re fired” or “We’ve decided not to renew your contract.” Terrible for the staff person being released, and terrible for the Board Members who make the often-painful decision. The event is even more terrible when it comes “out of the blue,” with no preliminary formal notice of unsatisfactory performance, no period of probation, and sometimes after a long and illustrious tenure at the theatre.

**In too many cases, problems do not blow over.**

Were there really not any signals? In retrospect, there must have been, but often the staff person simply didn’t recognize them or chose to ignore them, hoping it would all blow over. In too many cases, problems do not blow over, and in the hope that some of these “marriages” can be saved, I would like to list seven red flags that, if recognized and dealt with in an upfront, problem-solving atmosphere between Board and staff person, might enable the staff person to be proactive, and maybe save the job.

- The CEO’s contract is renewed, but for a shorter period than usual.
- The CEO is no longer a “partner” with the Board. He or she is not asked/allowed/expected to be a leader for the theatre. Decisions are made without or in spite of the CEO. Perhaps “impossible” goals or timelines are set, against which he or she will be measured, with no regard for his or her feedback regarding feasibility or appropriateness or impact on the staff, volunteers, and/or audience.
- The CEO’s authority to supervise other staff members is taken over by the Board, or a higher position is created to supervise the (former) CEO.
- A power struggle develops between the CEO and Board Member(s) who repeatedly challenge the CEO’s decisions and/or subvert her relationship with subordinate staff.
- The CEO underestimates the need for change in the organization.
- A couple of bad financial years put the theatre into a cash-flow crisis. Sometimes the Board feels the only thing to do is release the CEO and then things will be better. (This can be true if the CEO was the real cause of the problem through bad management or poor quality shows. But, he or she may be the scapegoat for poor Board performance in fundraising.)
- The chief staff person (artistic director, managing director) hasn’t been formally evaluated by the Board (a key Board responsibility) on an annual, mutually-agreed-upon set of objectives.



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These issues should, of course, be dealt with in a responsible, mature way. An annual evaluation is the best way to nip problems in the bud.

Unfortunately, many Board Members feel uncomfortable carrying out this major responsibility. I encourage staff members to insist on it, and start the process, if necessary, with a self-evaluation that includes accomplishments (measured against mutually-agreed-upon objectives, if possible), areas needing more Board support, areas needing more personal attention, skill building and/or time, and perhaps a list of suggested objectives for the coming year. Be honest, but don't be suicidal. Needless to say, if a Board has a long-range plan with three to five year goals, annual objectives and a work plan for everyone for the year, this process will be much easier to conduct. And I do believe strongly the Board should evaluate its own performance as well.

## It isn't okay for a Board NOT to do it just because they don't know how. It is their job.

A staff person has the right to expect positive as well as negative feedback. If there are deficiencies, they should be shared with an adequate opportunity to correct them; a period of probation if necessary; and all agreements should be in writing and signed by staff and Board. If Boards need help in doing this, they should find a human resources expert at a nearby college, hospital, or major business to guide them through the process. It isn't okay for a Board NOT to do it just because they don't know how. It is their job.

On the other side of the coin, there are red flags for Boards to pay attention to in terms of keeping or releasing a staff member, even one of long standing.

1. Proven sexual harassment
2. Proven drinking or drug use on the job.
3. Not getting the agreed-upon job done, e.g.,
  - Productions consistently not ready for opening night.
  - Productions consistently of poor quality.
  - Assigned fundraising not done (grant writing, advertising solicitation).
4. Drop-off in volunteers (precipitous or consistent over time).
5. High staff turnover.
6. Evidence of lying or fraud of any kind.
7. Imprudent or inept financial management.
8. Incomplete or inadequate financial reports.
9. Evidence of loss of donors or members.
10. Alienating the media or engaging in any behavior which reflects badly on the theatre.

Once again, at the first hint of a problem, the Board President or Personnel Committee should sit down with the staff person to determine real facts, set limits, and list bottom-line expectations for changed behaviors and/or better outcomes — or rally around and protect the CEO from unwarranted accusations and gossip. If we really care about our theatres, and especially our people, problems must not be allowed to fester. They rarely “go away,” and once they grow out of proportion, it is usually the paid staff person's head that rolls, whether fairly or not.

There are times, however, when separation is appropriate (and life enhancing) for the staff member and for the theatre: when dreams are no longer mutual or shared; when the staff member feels he/she can no longer be effective (for whatever reason); and when he/she is no longer challenged to do his/her best in this situation (is essentially “phoning in his/her

*continued on next page*



**“Pleasingly silly!  
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Three manly stagehands have some very dainty shoes to fill when The Andrew Sisters fail to appear for a USO performance.

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performance"). Remember that Maslow said, "A met need is no longer a motivator." If the community still needs 50's comedies and musicals, and the CEO only feels alive and excited doing "avant garde" shows, then it's clear there is no longer a "match" here. It is in everyone's best interest to move on to new relationships and different challenges. In that case, a planned transition and proper send-off are in order.

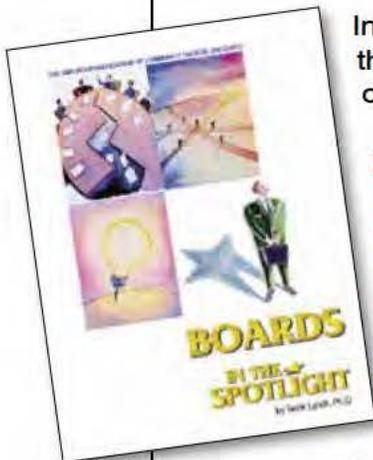
I am told by experts in the personnel field that firing someone is the hardest job to do, and it "never gets any easier." It'll probably never get any easier for those of us in community theatre either, but at least I hope it will get fairer and will happen less often as a "palace coup." ♦

Twink Lynch wrote a regular column on boardmanship 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 (page 61).



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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY THEATRE

## Bloomington Playwrights Project Woodward/Newman Drama Award

Woodward/Newman Drama Award  
Bloomington Playwrights Project  
107 W. 9th Street  
Bloomington, IN 47404

The Woodward/Newman Drama Award is an exclusive honor offered by Bloomington Playwrights Project, (BPP), sponsored by the Newman's Own Foundation, remembering the many great dramas Joanne Woodward and Paul Newman performed in together.

It presents the best unpublished full-length drama of the year with a cash prize of \$3,000, a full production as part of the BPP's Mainstage season, along with travel reimbursement. The top 10 finalists will be announced at the end of May with the winner announced in June 2016.

\$10 submission fee

Submission deadline: March 1, 2016 (postmark, must arrive by March 10)

No email submissions

Details: [newplays.org](http://newplays.org)

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## How do you reach out to youth to participate in your theatre programs?

**Responses from Facebook**  
([facebook.com/AACT.org](https://www.facebook.com/AACT.org))

Our theatre relies a lot on word of mouth from students who have participated in the past. When we give them a good experience, they can't wait to tell their friends in every way possible - social media, talking up audition dates, posting flyers and posters, inviting them to events, etc.

Holland Civic Theatre, Holland, MI  
[hollandcivictheatre.org](http://hollandcivictheatre.org)

I have been a member of AACT since AACTFest 2003. The networking, workshops, and the opportunity to meet many vendors is invigorating and educational. AACTFest will always be on my calendar!

**Susan Harrington, Arlington Friends of Drama, Arlington, MA**



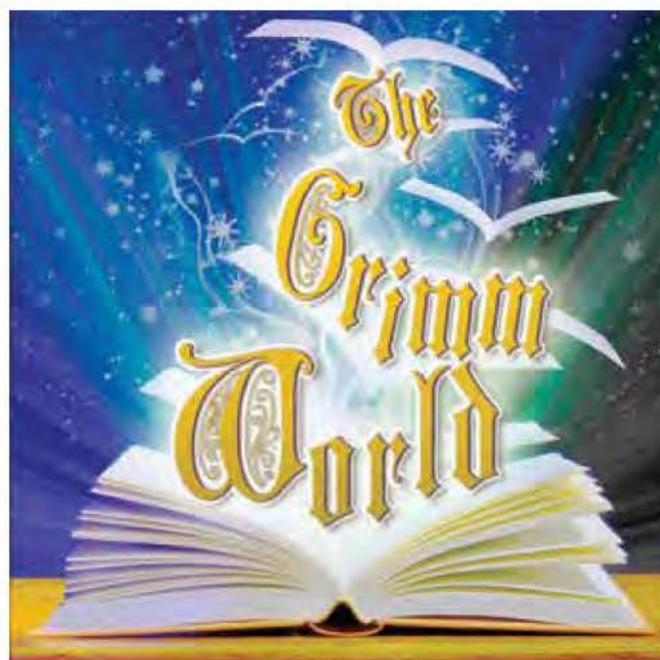
### Artie's Advocacy Tip

Social media represents a powerful marketing tool for community theatres. Insure their effectiveness by incorporating them into your overall marketing plan.

**Responses from AACTList**  
(to sign up for AACTList, go to [aact.org/aactlist](http://aact.org/aactlist))

We do a big musical in the spring each year. We start our shows early, 7 PM, and the first thing the audience sees are kids performing a Broadway choral medley. These medleys are between six and ten minutes long, and the kids get a chance to shine on their own with lots of singing and dancing solos. Their performance includes props, stage lights, and set pieces, and is a big hit with our audience. We have averaged about 75 kids in our pre-show the last three years. Coming up this spring, the younger kids will perform a *Music Man* choral medley, and the older kids and teens will perform a *Footloose* medley. Many of the kids who participate in these pre-shows come tryout for our other productions. It's a win-win!

Courtney Simson, Producing Artistic Director  
Truckee Community Theatre, Truckee, CA  
[truckeecommunitytheatre.com](http://truckeecommunitytheatre.com)



**Play | 6F, 6M, Ensemble | 75 Minutes**

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When	Who/What	Where	Information
Jan 14-17	Mississippi Theatre Association State Festival 2016	MS Meridian	662-418-3870 mta-online.org
Feb 18-21	American Association of Community Theatre 2016 Winter Meetings	TX San Antonio	866-687-2228 aact.org
Feb 26-28	Wisconsin Association of Community Theatres WACTCon 2016	WI West Allis	414-774-4768 www.wact.org

For dates farther ahead, check the website: [aact.org](http://aact.org)

## AACT Winter Meetings

February 18-21, 2016 • San Antonio, TX

You can also find this info at [aact.org/calendar](http://aact.org/calendar)

### Hotel

Drury Plaza Hotel San Antonio Riverwalk, 105 South St. Mary's St, San Antonio, TX 78205  
Visit [druryhotels.com](http://druryhotels.com) for reservations or call 800-325-0720 Refer to group code 2252371

Room Rate \$159 plus tax, for single or double, add \$10 for 3 people, \$20 for four in room. Includes complimentary hot breakfast, afternoon snacks, internet access, and more.

Deadline for room rate is January 17, 2016

### Airport

San Antonio International Airport (SAT)

**Airline Discounts** - 2-10% depending on class of service  
United book at [www.united.com](http://www.united.com), need two codes: ZCode ZTRS, Agreement Code 225501  
Delta book at [www.delta.com](http://www.delta.com), code: NNMKFT

Meetings will be at the hotel.

### Schedule

#### Thursday, February 18

Evening - Executive Committee & Finance Committee

#### Friday, February 19

Committee Meetings  
Evening - Reception and Tour - The Playhouse San Antonio  
[www.theplayhousesa.org/](http://www.theplayhousesa.org/)  
Show Options

#### Saturday, February 20

Morning & early afternoon - Committee Meetings  
Afternoon - Board

#### Sunday, February 21

Departures

**Questions?** Hotel and travel - contact Jill Patchin at [jill@aact.org](mailto:jill@aact.org);  
Meetings - contact Julie Crawford at [julie@aact.org](mailto:julie@aact.org)

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**Musical | 5F, 4M, Ensemble | 2 Hours**

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Look inside on pages 10 - 11 for more information



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