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DÉGAGÉ PARTNERSHIP BRINGS FRESH PERSPECTIVE TO SPRING MUSICAL

Based on the play *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw, *My Fair Lady* is a witty and thought-provoking musical that will sweep audiences along in this moving story of transformation, self-growth and love. Seeking to bring new light to this classic tale, Grand Rapids Civic Theatre's community partnership with Dégagé Ministries will highlight stories of transformation within our own community thanks to The Open Door Women's Center.

Eliza and Higgins are fortunate to have found each other and created a support system from which each could grow. Likewise, The Open Door Women's Center seeks to be a support system in our community for women in transition. Our community partnership will help bring awareness to the good work our neighbors are doing for real women in our community.



Eliza Doolittle is a woman with a seemingly dismal future. Her thick accent, limited education, and meager means as a flower seller on the streets of London has isolated her from the bustling community. Henry Higgins is a professor with a great deal of means and intelligence, but he lacks compassion and connection.

"Through the magic of theatre, we watch the transformation of Eliza. With each physical change, her confidence grows and she awakens

Community partnership with Dégagé Ministries brings *My Fair Lady* from stage to real life.

a strength of character that has been buried for so long," said Director Allyson Paris. "As an audience, we also begin to feel Higgins internal transformation as he learns empathy and awakens a new understanding of the needs of the world around him."

"My Fair Lady can help others understand the power of hope. When we believe in others, treat everybody with dignity and respect, and restore hope, lives are transformed."

Brooke Jevicks, Dégagé

The Open Door Women's Center at Dégagé provides a safe haven during the overnight hours to adult women in crisis. Since The Open Door began in 2003, they have served nearly 4,000 individual women. In 2016, there were nearly 10,000 overnight stays. "The Open Door Women's Center is not only a safe haven, but it is a place of community," said Brooke Jevicks, Dégagé Development Director. "You can see hope restored in each woman as she becomes connected and rebuilds her life. Preventing isolation is powerful."

"Through this partnership, we hope community members realize that there are women right here in Grand Rapids, just a few blocks from Civic Theatre, who are living like Eliza," said Jevicks. "Together we can all make a difference, restore hope, and transform lives."

Civic Theatre selects community partners throughout the season to bring conversations from the stage to our community, recognizing the power of theatre to encourage reflection on our own values. Stay tuned to our blog and e-newsletters this spring as we share more stories of lives transformed through Dégagé Ministries.

ENSURING CIVIC THEATRE'S VIBRANT FUTURE WITH THE MAJESTIC SOCIETY

Established in 1986, Grand Rapids Civic Theatre's endowment fund provides a perpetual base of support to assure the financial stability of the theatre for generations to come. Through our endowment, generations of families, actors and students yet to come will be able to enjoy the same high-quality performances you see today – creating priceless memories and diving deeper into creativity that challenges each individual to create the best version of themselves.

A special component of the endowment's support are members of our Majestic Society, who have set aside funds for Civic Theatre in their planned giving. In 2017, Gary and Sue Milligan decided to commemorate the impact of Civic Theatre on their family's lives by joining our Majestic Society.

"My love of theatre began when I was a very young girl. I have vivid memories of my mother taking my sisters and me to see fairy tales on stage," shared Sue Milligan. "In 1990, I took our three-year-old daughter to see her first play at Grand Rapids Civic Theatre. Afterward, the actors were in the lobby greeting the kids and adults. We met the Wicked Witch, played by Eva Switek. My daughter was mesmerized."

This experience launched the Milligan family into a legacy of volunteerism with Civic Theatre. Sue joined the board of directors, and their daughter took classes and appeared on the Civic stage. Having seen first-hand the impact of Civic Theatre, the Milligans wanted to ensure this same outlet for creative expression and self-growth would be available for generations to come.

DONATION 101



What's the difference? An **annual gift** supports the present needs of the theatre, and is used within the year you donate. An **endowment gift** is invested, growing over time to ensure financial perpetuity for the theatre. Both types of gifts are necessary to ensure Civic Theatre's impact in the community continues.

"Civic Theatre is an important community asset that has a positive impact on people of all ages, so we are grateful that we can support the annual fund and the endowment fund," said Milligan. "Taking the next step to provide a gift to the endowment fund through our estate plan was an easy decision to make. We have a desire to see the activities of Civic Theatre continue for generations into the future."

If Civic Theatre has made a positive impact on your life and you would like to ensure the legacy of Civic Theatre for future generations, please consider supporting the endowment. Include a note with your next donation that you would like it designated to the endowment fund, or contact Nancy Brozek at nbrozek@grct.org for more information on how to join our Majestic Society.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Our endowment fund was established in 1986
- The endowment provides 5% of operational funding needed each year
- Today, the endowment stands over \$2.3 million

JUMP INTO CREATIVITY WITH PERFORMANCE BLOCK CLASSES!



Did hearing *Annie's* upbeat and inspirational songs leave your child tapping their toes, singing along, or dreaming about what it would be like to be on the Civic stage? If you know a child whose eyes lit up at the sight of our fantastic costumes, sets, and dancing... Performance Block may be the next step!

Our second annual Performance Block classes for fourth through twelfth graders mimic the experience of a Mainstage process – from audition to performance – in a condensed block of time. A professional staff

of directors, choreographers, and designers guide students through the entire process, culminating in two public performances on Civic's Meijer Majestic Stage. Last year, over 900 audience members came to support Civic students in this wonderful opportunity.

This year's shows are *Willy Wonka*, *Kids* (musical) and *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* (play). Pre-requisite classes are required prior to audition. Learn more at www.grct.org/educate/classes/ or 616-222-6653.

“Low Sensory Night was a blessing in so many ways,” shared one parent who attended. “My child with sensory issues was enthralled. It was fabulous to be in a non-stressful environment that was so welcoming. Thank you!”

Grand Rapids Civic Theatre took *Seussical the Musical’s* lyrics, ‘Oh, the things you can think’ to heart when imagining ways to engage the community in this fanciful tale based on Dr. Seuss’s popular stories. The musical’s core messages of acceptance and appreciation of everyone was the motivation to create a special evening for those with diverse sensory needs. Community partners, sponsors and volunteers rallied to bring the idea of Low Sensory Night from dream to reality in October 2017.

“My 10-year-old daughter is on the autism spectrum and has ADHD, anxiety, and DMDD. Going to a show was never an option for us because my daughter can’t sit still and has outbursts,” shared one parent who attended. “With Low Sensory Night, my family was able to enjoy the show, and my daughter sat for an hour and half! Thank you again.”

“Low Sensory Night encompassed the true magic of theatre, as we saw individuals completely engaged with a performance – something many family members stated was atypical,” shared Jenna Pope, Low Sensory Night Coordinator. “It was truly a wonderful evening watching the attendees express their enthusiasm for the show and beg to stay in the theatre after the production ended.”



Volunteers gather for a special training on Low Sensory Night

Civic Theatre volunteers went above and beyond to make this evening a success. Over 27 volunteers were on hand to give tours, help families find the cool down zones, and more. *Seussical the Musical* cast and crew voluntarily gathered for a special rehearsal to adjust their stage blocking and learn more about how to create inclusivity through their performance.

Thank you to all of our volunteers and Low Sensory Night sponsors who helped make this magical night possible. If you would like to see Low Sensory Night programming continue, please consider a special donation to Civic Theatre for this purpose.

SPECIAL ELEMENTS

used to create an inclusive performance for those with diverse sensory needs included:

- Reduced noise and lights during the performance
- Volunteers to greet families and give welcome tours
- Complimentary parking to reduce stimuli between the car and theatre
- A welcome packet sent to each family in advance, including theatre maps, character descriptions and show information
- Cool-down zones with fidget spinners and other items outside the auditorium where children and their families could relax



GRAND RAPIDS
CIVIC THEATRE
30 N DIVISION AVE GRAND RAPIDS MI 49503

IN THIS EDITION OF ENCORE

INAUGURAL
LOW SENSORY NIGHT
A SUCCESS

DÉGAGÉ MINISTRIES
BRINGS NEW LIGHT TO
MY FAIRLADY

ENSURING CIVIC'S
FUTURE WITH THE
MAJESTIC SOCIETY

THANK YOU

to our Majestic Society members!

Thank you for ensuring a vibrant future of theatre arts for generations to come by including Civic Theatre in your planned giving.

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CONNECT



MISSION

WE EXIST TO ENHANCE THE CULTURAL LIFE of West Michigan by creating opportunities for people of all ages to enjoy live theatre, perform on stage and access a comprehensive theatre arts education program.