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Feeling worthy. Creating a buzz like never before. Sheer joy!

These are words that teachers have used to describe the impact of programs supported by the Educational Theatre Foundation.

Most of us looking at this report are reading it because we are involved in theatre or education. We know how school theatre changes — and saves — lives. We know that it sets up students for success by helping them become more well-rounded, empathetic, collaborative, confident, and a myriad of other personal qualities needed to improve the world today. We already support the performing arts through making, teaching, or enjoying theatre. Many of us are also in a position to personally help expand access to quality K-12 theatre programs through a financial contribution.

ETF was created to support students and teachers who aren’t so fortunate to have these opportunities, whether they come from high-poverty areas; or from predominantly African-American and Hispanic communities, which generally have half the access to arts education as their white peers; or whether they simply lack the support or professional development they need to grow.

Every child in America deserves access to quality theatre and all that it has to offer in their school. That’s why we are here, and with your help, we’re off to a great start!

With gratitude,

Julie Cohen Theobald, President

Matt Conover, Chair,
National Board of Trustees
In 1929, the founders of the International Thespian Society had a vision to bring new levels of recognition to theatre in schools, and since then more than 2.3 million students have been inducted into the honor society. In 1989, the organization rebranded under the umbrella of the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA) to include support to teachers and increase advocacy and public awareness about the value of curricular theatre.

A further enhancement of the vision of shaping lives through theatre education led to the launch of the Educational Theatre Foundation, which has been formed as the philanthropic arm of EdTA, to include support to teachers and increase advocacy and public awareness about the value of curricular theatre.

ETF funding priorities include:

**JumpStart Theatre**, a program that builds sustainable musical theatre programs in underserved middle schools that previously had none.

**Need-based grants to schools** to provide teaching and performance resources and equipment in under-resourced schools. Funded programs include Send a Troupe to Festival, New Troupe Charter Grants, and expanded competitive grants to respond to specific school needs.

**Merit and need-based grants to individuals** to nurture the next generation of theatre teachers and artists. Funded programs include scholarships, Playworks, Musicalworks, Democracyworks, and professional development grants.

“I believe that bringing theatre to young people in as many schools as possible is vital.”

Robert Greenblatt, Warner Media Entertainment and Direct-to-Customer, Chairman; Donor, Member, ETF Honorary Board
While groundwork was being laid throughout 2017, a major personal donation from then-NBC chair Robert Greenblatt, earmarked for JumpStart Theatre, provided the momentum for the Foundation’s public launch, which was announced at the organization’s traditional benefit event, Thespians Go Hollywood, in Los Angeles on November 11, 2017.

In making the announcement Mr. Greenblatt said, “I’m extremely proud to be getting in on JumpStart Theatre from the ground floor. As someone whose life was fundamentally enriched by a robust theatre program in my high school in Rockford, Ill., I believe that bringing theatre to young people in as many schools as possible is vital. We know the powerful social and developmental benefits that kids get from the arts, and it’s up to us to fill in the gaps as public and government funding becomes more scarce. I can’t imagine how different my life and career would be had I not grown up with theatre and music, and if I can help bring that to other kids across the country nothing would make me happier.”

Additionally, The Shubert Foundation awarded a grant to support the expansion of the JumpStart Theatre program. It was the first time The Shubert Foundation has given a grant to an educational program outside of New York City.

The opening year culminated with two major donation announcements—Broadway producer Jeffrey Seller made a major personal gift earmarked for JumpStart Theatre, which was announced at Broadway Back to School in New York in September. And more than $250,000 was donated to the Craig Zadan Memorial Fund in tribute to the late producer who, with his producing partner Neil Meron, were honored as the inaugural recipients of the Theatre For Life Award at Thespians Go Hollywood 2018.
Zander is a student at Felicity-Franklin Middle School, which has been part of the JumpStart Theatre (JST) program since the pilot phase in 2015. Zander has had behavior issues since kindergarten, spending plenty of time in the principal’s office. One teacher thought being on stage would be a great outlet and encouraged him to audition. He was cast in a lead role, and the responsibility helped him realize his potential and leadership ability. The next year, he played Harold Hill in The Music Man JR., became an all-A honor student with perfect attendance, and was elected class president.

He has embraced public speaking, sharing his love of theatre with the American Legion, the Ladies Auxiliary, and a 550-person audience at the annual JumpStart Theatre Showcase. He even nominated Elizabeth “Bizzy” Robertson, the teacher who encouraged him to audition, for a local Queen for a Day award. Thanks to Zander’s essay about how she turned his life around through theatre, she won the contest. The pair and their families were treated to the touring production of The King and I, a well-deserved reward for their hard work.

Not only Zander was transformed. Both the school and community responded positively to this new opportunity. In the second year, student participation doubled from 40 to 70, as they jumped at the chance to do three performances — one for the school and two for the public. More than 300 people attended each performance, which is a remarkable turnout in a town with a population of 900. Robertson and Felicity-Franklin are committed to continuing the program at the conclusion of their grant.

The JumpStart Theatre Program Story

The JumpStart Theatre program creates sustainable theatre arts programs in middle schools where there previously were none. The vision for the program is to:

- be sustainable and implemented in underserved middle schools nationwide;
- engage as many students as possible in all aspects of theatre; and
- prepare students for high school, college, and the workforce by instilling the 21st-century skills of collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking.

Participating schools are chosen through a rigorous application process and receive training, materials, and budget support to produce their first full-scale musical production. The support continues for three years until the program becomes self-sustaining. Non-theatre teachers are equipped with skills and resources to produce their school's first musical through a proven combination of bootcamp style training and hands-on mentoring.

The Educational Theatre Foundation, which is funded entirely by gifts and grants, operates JST through a national network of regional theatre company partners who are selected based on their record of success in running educational programs for children. JumpStart Theatre partners are:

- Alliance Theatre, Atlanta, Ga.; La Jolla Playhouse, La Jolla, Calif.; Mountain City Center for the Arts, Frostburg, Md.; Stages St. Louis, St. Louis, Mo.; The Children’s Theatre, Cincinnati, Ohio.* (original pilot site)
ROSS KEYS MIDDLE SCHOOL

ROSS KEYS MIDDLE SCHOOL is a Title I school in the Ferguson-Florrisant School District in Missouri, a community still recovering from the Michael Brown tragedy of 2014. The school, ranked 535 out of 568 middle schools in the state and where all 800 students qualify for free or reduced lunch, was selected for the program starting in the 2018-19 school year.

In the school’s application, Douglas Erwin, the district’s fine arts coordinator, said he saw the potential for the program to help give students a positive focus and build positive relationships among them.

Principal Chris Clark is prioritizing incorporating the arts into their curriculum, noting theatre can improve literacy.

In preparing for their first musical, *Once on This Island JR.* in April 2019, choir teacher Talya Perry described it as a dream come true, saying, “I hope our kids grow, have fun, and discover the possibilities in the arts, not just on stage but backstage also. This grant will jump start our theatre program with the training and resources needed to put on quality productions.”

HISTORY

The Educational Theatre Association (EdTA) created JST in collaboration with New York City-based companies iTheatrics and Music Theatre International (MTI), launching the pilot in Cincinnati in 2015. The program grew to its planned nine schools there in 2017 and then began national expansion thanks to a major donation. (See page 3.)

JST is modeled after the successful Broadway Junior Musical Theatre Program founded by The Shubert Foundation, iTheatrics, and MTI in 2005 in collaboration with the New York City Department of Education. (See page 3.) In 2018 the Broadway Back to School Award was given to Freddie Gershon, co-chairman of Music Theatre International (MTI), and Dr. Sharon Dunn for their work on this program.

PILOT RESEARCH RESULTS

In conjunction with the pilot, the Centers for Research on Creativity conducted a three-year research project. Among the findings are “genuine opportunities for students to cultivate their empathy, starting with their characters but extending to their peers and real relationships in their lives.” JumpStart Theatre students demonstrated improved sense of ownership, creative problem-solving, confidence, collaboration, and sense of community. Teachers demonstrated increased ability to engage in co-creation with students and better confidence in their overall teaching abilities. One teacher shares, “My biggest takeaway, and the thing that I’m most appreciative of, is the knowledge that I’ve gained about myself. I have become a better teacher by using what I’ve learned through JumpStart Theatre.”

STARTING OUT

Cross Keys Middle School

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From top to bottom: JumpStart theatre students perform in the 2018 showcase in Cincinnati, OH; Cast of Annie JR. from Oyler School; Roberts Academy students prepare for their performance of Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR.; Aiken New Tech High School students performing *Suessical JR.*
At the training boot camp held by JST partner La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego, local mentor Lydia Real noted that two principals joined their teacher teams and really gained insight. “It was great seeing their aha moments,” she said. “Teachers who were initially resistant to participating were really engaged by the end of the day.” As an experienced theatre professional, Lydia was also surprised to learn some new techniques from Marty Johnson, director of education and resident director at iTheatrics and a member of JST’s founding team. He taught all the parts of a dance number to the entire class, then let each individual choose the part they wanted to do. It made the dance number seem significantly less daunting and sped up the rehearsal process.

Roberts Academy

At Roberts Academy in Cincinnati, the student body is from 12 different countries; 65 percent are recent Guatemalan immigrants. Roberts joined JST primarily to use musical theatre to help teach English to students. A rousing performance of Schoolhouse Rock Live! JR. showed that it worked. Rebecca Stutzman, a Roberts teacher, says that academic performance improved in spring 2018 thanks to this first-time experience for Roberts’ students.
Thanks to the Educational Theatre Foundation’s partnership with NBC, 50 high schools each received a $10,000 grant through the R.I.S.E. (Recognizing and Inspiring Student Expression) America Grant Program. The program took its cue from the NBC drama Rise, which was inspired by the true story of a high school theatre program in Pennsylvania. In all, 937 schools applied. They were from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and Guam, with 48 percent designated as Title 1 and with two-thirds having more than 40 percent of their student bodies on free or reduced lunch.

In their applications, the schools documented needs for essentials: sound, lights, curtains, stages, storage for props and costumes. Projects funded by the grants ranged from technical (audiovisual equipment and training, acoustic panels, stage and costume storage construction and repairs) to production (show royalties, choreography and vocal coaching assistance) to professional development and special student experiences (master classes and workshops, sponsored attendance at professional productions and theatre conferences).

Above: Thespian Troupe 287 of Leavenworth (Kan.) High School on their new stage floor.

ENHANCING EXCELLENCE

“The R.I.S.E. America grant made our students feel worthy. It has changed their path.”

In their grant application, Leavenworth (Kan.) High School, home of Thespian Troupe 287, requested funds to replace the aging stage floor in the auditorium, which was beginning to cause safety concerns.

Winning the grant, which covered a portion of the floor cost, generated positive attention throughout the school community, where the auditorium is used for multiple district events, in addition to outside groups using the facility for their presentations, concerts, and more.

In the words of theatre program director and Thespian Troupe director Jennifer Morgan-Beuchat, winning the grant created “a buzz about theatre here like never before.”

As a result, the Leavenworth Unified School District provided the rest of the funds needed to pay for the floor upgrade. And that was just the beginning.

The school district’s director of facilities, Matt Dedeke, and the team installing the floor noticed the walls in the auditorium were well-worn. Dedeke also realized the care and appreciation that Leavenworth High School’s theatre department had for the space, as well as the good timing to make other updates prior to opening night of the fall musical. With the support of the Leavenworth Board of Education, they upgraded the auditorium with new stairs leading to the stage, paint throughout, carpeting repair,
and new house lighting. The board also approved new microphones, including a traveling wireless system for the theatre program’s touring productions. The R.I.S.E. America grant led to an update of a facility important to the entire community.

Once the new stage floor was installed and the students began to practice their tap dance, another person was inspired by the developments at his alma mater. Mason Frasher, an International Honor Thespian and former Thespian troupe president at Leavenworth, is currently majoring in music at Northwestern University. Frasher wrote a grant request to Northwestern to bring in an expert to teach current students tap technique in preparation for presenting Newsies.

Morgan-Beuchat describes the students dancing on the new floor as “sheer joy.” “The sound, the look, the texture — they were in awe at first, almost afraid to walk on it. The pride in using the stage has changed how they practice, perform, and treat the auditorium on a daily basis.”

She adds, “There is a new sense of pride, worth, and validation, not just with our theatre kids and program but also district-wide. We received a R.I.S.E. America grant. That is a huge deal! Our program focuses on how theatre changes lives, and now the city has opened its arms to that reality.

“I know we are only one school, but please know the impact this grant has had on the Leavenworth community. The R.I.S.E. America grant made our students feel worthy. It has changed their path.”

As the schools put the grants to work, common themes emerged.

Benefits of Credentialing

Winning a grant “credentials” the theatre program in its school and community, bringing increased levels of positive attention, support, and new expectations.

Seaside (Calif.) High School - With an enrollment composed primarily of students of color and LGBTQ+ youth, the Seaside Dramatic Arts Program worked out of repurposed spaces on the campus, with no theatre or operating budget.

They said, “Receiving the R.I.S.E. America grant was covered by every local news outlet. Being chosen as one of the 50 schools honored has elevated our status in the community. … Additionally, the school’s facilities leader added $20,000 to the $10,000 we received from the R.I.S.E. America grant to make this new space even more useful and permanent.”

Professionalism Inspires Professionalism

Better facilities and equipment and the exposure to professional theatre education and productions expand and strengthen student objectives, commitment, and performance quality.

Nānākuli High School, Waianae, Hawaii - On the rural and economically challenged leeward coast of Oahu, Hawaii, 73 percent of the mostly native Hawaiian students are on free or reduced lunch.

They said, “The audience turnout for this production was one of the highest we have had over the last eight years, with many coming for the first time. For the students, the impact of being in Shrek also was inspirational. The students had some doubts about being able to perform a production of this scale well, and based on the response from audience members and themselves, they now know that their abilities are only limited by how hard they are willing to work.”
Personal and community impact extends beyond direct program participants.

Malcolm (Neb.) Public Schools - Malcolm, Neb., is a tiny farming community just outside Lincoln. All students, K-12, are in one building. Rehearsals are at 6 a.m., since they take place in the gym, where there are conflicts with evening sports practices. The school requested the grant to construct a 2,000 square foot storage facility for the theatre program’s sole use for sets and costumes, making productions more cost-efficient. They said, “On construction day, it was 102 degrees with a 15 to 25 mph wind, but the community was amazing. A local restaurant provided food, and parents and community members pitched in with drinks and snacks. There have been many moments like this and many generous gifts, not only from theatre families but also from individuals and businesses in the community and surrounding area. The town is all abuzz.”

“The R.I.S.E America grant allowed us to gain respect within our community and school...”

School theatre programs are enabled and strengthened by the grant projects through a “multiplier” effect, well beyond the $10,000 award.

Henryetta (Okla.) High School - Formerly, the school in the town of 5,000 had a thriving program, which went dark due to budget cuts in 2012. In 2016, two students started Henryetta High School’s Performing Arts Student Association, with the goal of reestablishing a program, and succeeded in raising $4,000 on their own, with no funding from the school. At that point, they had nine students and one big dream. Now, thanks to the grant, there are 80 students in the program. They said, “The R.I.S.E. America grant allowed us to gain respect within our community and school that we were missing the year before. The grant allowed us to put on a fabulous production, which recruited many new members. “We have people from the community reaching out and asking us for what we need help with, including Kristin Chenoweth and Jeremy Hays, who held a master class and allowed everyone in our program to come for free. “We also give students a place to belong. This is a home. The R.I.S.E. America grant solidified how important this program is for the school and for the community.”
The Broadway Back to School Award was presented at the fourth annual New York benefit event for ETF, also called Broadway Back to School, which supports theatre education programs for schools in need by bringing together professional artists along with current high school students. The announcement of a major gift from a Broadway producer added to the evening’s celebration.

Jeffrey Seller made a donation in support of its JumpStart Theatre, the program that builds sustainable musical theatre programs in middle schools that previously had none. The gift will enable the program to expand to a new city in 2019.

ETF President Julie Cohen Theobald thanked Seller, saying, “On a night where we celebrate Broadway giving back to school theatre, it means so much to receive this support from such a visionary Broadway producer. I’ve seen the transformative impact of JumpStart Theatre in the most underserved communities in this country, and this gift will change many lives for the better.”

Entertaining and engaging the sell-out crowd, performers included Preston Max Allen, Jeremy Brown, Morgan Siobhan Green, Justin Gregory Lopez, Michael Maliakel, Marcy & Zina, Bonnie Milligan, and Garrett Zuercher. Each of the performers thanked one of their high school theatre teachers. And one was present.

Tony Award-winning theatre teacher and Thespian troupe director Corey Mitchell from North Carolina was on hand to congratulate and have a mini reunion with his former student, Renee Rapp. In addition the show included International Thespian Society student performers from New York and New Jersey.
The Educational Theatre Foundation’s Broadway Back to School Award recognizes the impact of key leaders in the theatrical industry and education in building access and excellence in school theatre.

The inaugural recipients were Freddie Gershon, co-chairman of Music Theatre International (MTI), and Dr. Sharon Dunn, formerly senior manager for arts education for the New York City Department of Education, for their work in initiating the Broadway Junior program, which was a breakthrough in the history of school theatre, and which inspired ETF’s JumpStart Theatre initiative to help build middle school musical theatre programs across the country.

Many at-risk students, who stand to benefit the most from theatre education, have little to no access. The work of Freddie Gershon and Dr. Sharon Dunn has made musical theatre more accessible to thousands of children, serving the very important purpose of growing access, equity, and inclusion. As the inaugural honorees, these worthy recipients set the highest standard and ensure the award’s continued impact.
At a deeply moving event, those who were profoundly touched by the late Craig Zadan paid tribute to him and to his producing partner Neil Meron, who were honored as the inaugural recipients of the Theatre for Life Award at ETF’s benefit gala Thespians Go Hollywood. The pair had been selected as the award’s recipients weeks before Zadan’s untimely passing in August.

In presenting the award, actress Renée Zellweger said, “Craig was a selfless friend, a man of great character, an advocate for what is right and true, and a great storyteller. Craig and Neil’s work has shaped history and changed lives.”

In a remarkable outpouring of affection and support, a few of the luminaries whose lives were forever shaped by working with him shared personal remembrances and sang some of his favorite songs, including Kristin Chenoweth, Harry Connick Jr., Darren Criss, Sean Hayes, Megan Hilty, Jennifer Hudson, Kenny Leon, Audra McDonald, Debra Messing, Bernadette Peters, Amber Riley, John Stamos, and Nia Vardalos. Tributes were also made via video by Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson, and John Travolta. Elwood Hopkins, Zadan’s husband, noted that Craig often marveled at how many successful adults could trace their achievements—in any profession—to being part of a school musical or play.

In accepting the award Meron said, “I know Craig treasured the knowledge that NBC’s live musicals were family-viewing affairs in many households. To receive an award that celebrates the joy we were able to share with others through musical theatre is deeply meaningful to me. Thank you.”

In addition to the stars participating in the tribute, as is traditional for the Thespians Go Hollywood event, area students who are members of the International Thespian Society (ITS), were also tapped to perform “You Can’t Stop the Beat” from Hairspray. ITS is the honor society for middle and high school theatre students, which has inducted more than 2.3 million members into Thespian troupes since its founding in 1929.

Donations in Zadan’s memory continue to be accepted by ETF’s Craig Zadan Memorial Fund, which will provide grants to school musical theatre programs.
The Educational Theatre Foundation’s award, Theatre for Life, honors the imaginative transformation of live theatre in film, television, and associated media. The award recognizes individuals, groups, or companies who have dedicated their work to promoting and preserving the joy of theatre in a significant manner, leaving a lasting impact on generations to come.

As the inaugural recipients, Neil Meron and the late Craig Zadan were pioneers in redefining musical theatre for a new generation, making musicals accessible, delighting audiences, and driving mainstream interest.

Through their productions, Craig and Neil have set the standard for musical theatre on television and in films, bringing it to a national audience of young people everywhere.
Next Generation Works is a suite of programs designed to promote original writing by and for high school student members of the International Thespian Society. Whatever the future of the writers or their scripts, these programs are an exhilarating experience in a creative discipline seldom taught in high schools.

In 2018, more than 300 submissions were received from all over the U.S. and Canada and as far away as the United Arab Emirates. Finalists are invited to attend the International Thespian Festival, where the student writers work with professional directors, dramaturgs, musical directors, and volunteer actors to present their short works before a live audience at ITF. Based on their workshop experience, the students revise their script in preparation for professional publication and licensing as well as publication in Dramatics, the Educational Theatre Association’s magazine for high school theatre students.

Many participants have gone on to careers in theatre, writing, and related fields – including two-time Thespian Playworks participant Max Posner, featured in the December 2018 edition of Dramatics. Posner was able to give back with a unique perspective in summer 2018 as a dramaturg in the Thespian Playworks program. He can truly say to participants, I’ve been in your shoes.

And in 2018, the Dramatists Guild Foundation hosted the student winners at their New York City gala, where they had a one-on-one session with DGF board president Andrew Lippa and spoke individually with a bevy of other writers. The director of the Next Generation Works program, Gregory Bossler, thanked DGF for their support of these Thespian writers, who deeply appreciated the amazing experience. He said the encouragement they felt and sense of community they experienced at the gala was life-changing.

Valued by students and program underwriters alike.....

While Thespian Playworks launched in 1994, the rest of the suite is less than five years old but has already attracted the buy-in of premiere professional theatre organizations. The scope of the program is growing to incorporate a commissioned professional play, sponsored by Dramatists Play Service, and a commissioned professional musical piloting in 2019, sponsored by Concord Music.
In June, ETF announced an unprecedented partnership with the new Broadway musical comedy *The Prom*, which is donating a percentage of ticket sales to ETF. The producers said, “The entire team is so proud to give back to students across the country, to support the study of the performing arts, and encourage young artists to find their unique voice.”

The partnership was announced with a flash-mob of high school students doing a dance number from the show at awards ceremonies on Friday, June 29, at the International Thespian Festival, which is the premiere summer educational theatre arts experience for high school students and their teachers, produced by EdTA.

In addition, *The Prom* staged a nationwide contest for students, inviting them to submit a video of their rendition of the number “Dance with You” from the show, which tells the story of a small-town girl who is being sidelined in her efforts to bring her girlfriend to the prom, inspiring a group of Broadway stars to help them out.

Alaina Bozarth, a junior and three-star member of Thespian Troupe 8167 at Metro-East Lutheran High School in Worden, Ill., south of Springfield, won. She received a two-night trip to New York for herself and a companion. A highlight of the prize was the opportunity for Bozarth to have a one-on-one session with a member of the creative team plus get an exclusive behind-the-scenes look.

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**DANCING WITH THE PROM**

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**OPERATING REVENUE AND EXPENSES**

- **2018 REVENUE**
  - Contributions and Grants: $1,455,188
  - Other Income: $10,000
  - Total Revenue: $1,465,188

- **2018 EXPENSES**
  - Management and General: $49,074
  - Scholarships, Grants and Awards: $626,372
  - Program Services: $179,427
  - Fundraising & Development: $284,737
  - Total Expenses: $1,239,600

1% 99%

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Thespian Playworks for playwrights is sponsored by Samuel French;

Thespian Musicalworks for musical writers began in 2013 and is sponsored by TRW;

Thespian Filmworks for screenwriters launched in 2018 and is sponsored by New York Academy of Dramatic Arts;

Thespian Criticworks for arts journalists also began in 2018 and is sponsored by Broadway Direct. Noted critic Peter Filichia serves as a mentor.

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We are pleased to acknowledge the following donors for their generosity and support of the Educational Theatre Foundation in 2018.

**STARS**

**Visionary** ($25,000 and up)
- Robert Greenblatt
- The Lehrer-Seller Family Fund
- The H.B., E.W. and F.R. Luther Charitable Foundation
- Music Theatre International National Endowment for the Arts
- NBC Universal
- Dean Pitchford and Michael Meiliffe
- The Shubert Organization
- The Wunderkinder Foundation

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