



# Special Gifts Theatre, Inc.

Opening Doors to New Possibilities

April 2012

*Special Gifts Theatre (SGT) is a not-for-profit organization that provides children and teens with special needs, a unique, creative drama experience enabling personal growth while breaking down stereotypes related to disabilities within the community at large.*



"I want to thank you again for another wonderful year, actually our favorite all around. Not only because you gave our daughter a chance to really shine, but because of all the support you gave for us to really connect and develop friendships that will be life long."

– Parent of a Musical Theatre Student

## Rydell High Rocks on Stage

With a packed auditorium, 50's music playing in the background and smiling faces singing and dancing on stage, this year's production of Grease stole the hearts of all in attendance! There was not a dry eye in the audience when Sandy sang, "Look at Me I'm Sandra Dee" or when Danny and the T-birds rocked the stage with "Grease Lightning".

This unique show, designed as an ensemble, featured all the students and mentors in the program. Each had their opportunity to shine on stage throughout the entire performance. One of our SGT donors commented, "GREAT show! Loved it! Found myself clapping, dancing in my seat and really rooting for all the kids!"

This display of energy and excitement encapsulated the very essence of Special Gifts Theatre. Together, these students and mentors developed a show built on friendship, hard work and dedication. It took the entire class of Rydell High to rock the stage and it takes all of our supporters to keep that spotlight on!

On behalf of our T-Birds and Pink Ladies, thank you for your continued support and helping us rock the house with one of the largest audiences to date!



## A Smile BIGGER Than the Moon!

When Peter tenBrink started SGT at the young age of eight, he probably didn't know that ten years later he would be on ABC in a Hallmark feature film! Or maybe he did... here is an excerpt from the inspirational welcome he gave at the Grease productions this year..." At SGT actors are able to develop their own talents and abilities that are used everyday. Personally, it helped me gain independence and develop skills that one day would allow me the opportunity to be in several movies. God bless SGT!"

*We are so proud of you Peter!*



Peter with John Corbet in "A Smile as Big as the Moon."

"I was blown away by the whole thing—not really knowing what to expect given it was our daughter's first year mentoring. I was touched, inspired, moved and uplifted watching all of the kids—the buddies and mentors—come together to make magic on the stage. I am so grateful my daughter has the opportunity to be a part of something so meaningful. Thanks for all of your efforts!"

– Parent of a Musical Theatre Peer Mentor

## Kids Helping Kids

The word is spreading, the generosity is overflowing and a real difference is being made. We thank each of these young individuals for raising over \$22,000 for SGT programming through their individual fundraising and financial contributions: **Sarah Aiken, Kevin Conroy, Emma Fleischer, Marlena Higgins, Isabel Isaacson, Hanna London, Michael Rivkin** and the **students of Skokie School!**

Save the Date – March 2,3,9,10, 2013

Musical Theatre Announces the 2013 Performance!



Go to [www.specialgiftstheatre.org](http://www.specialgiftstheatre.org) and click on 'Join the Cast' for more info and to register!

## The Wizard of Neverland!



The Creative Drama class of 7-9 year olds exceeded everyone's expectations! Sharing a four month journey, the students and peer buddies began at the top of Jack's Beanstalk, traveled through the Great Pumpkin Patch, followed the Yellow Brick

Road and fought battles with Captain Hook. Combining the characters from the Wizard of Oz and Peter Pan, they created their very own show called, "The Wizard of Neverland!" The show was full of inspiration, humor and grace. Our theme song, "Do You Believe in Magic?" was answered with a resounding YES, as each of these students gave a magical performance on stage to a crowd of more than 130 individuals! One of our peer buddies sums it up best: "My favorite part of CDP is seeing my buddy every week. Each moment in Special Gifts Theatre counted!"

To register for the Creative Drama Program please visit our website at [www.specialgiftstheatre.org](http://www.specialgiftstheatre.org) and click on Programs.



## Traveling Troupe!

Who are the best advocates for the students at SGT? It's the students themselves! That is why the Traveling Troupe is so important. By showcasing the talents and abilities of these students out in the community, we are breaking down barriers and dispelling stereotypes. And what a busy Troupe they are! Just this year they have had a variety of performances which included events such as:

- Skokie Bash
- New Trier Half Time Show
- Sneak Peek Fundraiser
- Northbrook Arts Days
- Pinstripes Family Day

We are excited for the future of this program as it represents the very mission of SGT. Have an idea for a place the Traveling Troupe can perform? Want to get your child involved? Email [info@specialgiftstheatre.org](mailto:info@specialgiftstheatre.org)



The Traveling Troupe at their New Trier performance.

## Changing Lives



Andrew (student, left) and Michael (peer mentor, right)

When Andrew and Michael registered for Musical Theatre, they had no idea how their lives would change – and how they would change the lives of others. Andrew, a first time student, heard of

SGT through his school and signed up. Once the staff saw his enthusiasm and passion for the stage, they knew he would be a perfect Danny Zuko! Paired with Michael, his Peer Mentor, the two hit it off. Michael helped Andrew learn his lines, the choreography and the blocking on stage. By showtime, they were both ready – white t-shirts, leather jackets, greased back hair and all! The impact for these young men went far beyond the scenes at Rydell High. Michael, 13, who was having his Bar Mitzvah requested that in lieu of gifts, donations be made to SGT. Andrew attended the celebration and the outpouring of support was incredible! Over \$7,500 was raised, plus this gift doubled through a matching grant we had in place! These funds are used to further the programs at SGT and ensure that friendships such as Michael and Andrew can continue far into the future!

## New Ambassador Joins SGT!

Welcome to our newest Ambassador, Tim Finnegan! Tim is a graduate from SGT that has kept close ties with the actors and mentors in the program. He will be part of our Ambassador team going into the community and speaking on behalf of SGT. Tim surprised his long time mentor, Jeremy Breit, (who will be leaving SGT after 10 years to go to college) by presenting him with a gift and a beautiful speech during the Grease intermission! *Tim, thank you for sharing your SGT story that will impact so many others!*



Tim Finnegan (left) and Jeremy Breit (right)

## Together We Can Make a Difference!

It is through your generous gifts that these opportunities and stories come to life! Your donations provide community outreach opportunities, therapeutic services, program expansion, and so much more! Most importantly, they are used to share our mission and vision of acceptance for all! You can support SGT with the enclosed envelope or online at [www.specialgiftstheatre.org](http://www.specialgiftstheatre.org).

Corporate Partnership opportunities are available for the 2012-2013 season. Learn more by calling 847-564-7704.

Thank you for your continued support!