

Special Gifts Theatre, Inc.

Opening Doors to New Possibilities

August 2011

Special Gifts Theatre (SGT) is 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.

Go Grease Lightning!

As one season draws to a close, another one begins! We are on the heels of an extraordinary season of Honk Jr. This show encapsulated the very essence of what Special Gifts Theatre (SGT) means – acceptance, self-esteem and pride. We thank all of our actors and mentors who did an outstanding job, as they told the story of a duckling who had the knack to honk – instead of quack! But this difference, like all our differences, quickly became something to celebrate instead of shy away from - a powerful reminder for all of our students, staff, and audience members! From the barnyard to Rydell High, this year's production is Grease! Our full cast of over 100 students and mentors are thrilled to participate in one of the most

popular Rock 'n' Roll musicals of all time! Be sure to mark your calendars to support our Greasers, Pink Ladies and the rest of our high school class of 1959! This is a show that you will not want to miss! A special thank you to Ronald Taft, Cori Dunn and co-creator of Grease, Jim Jacobs, who helped us secure the rights to Grease at no cost to our program. Jim even sent a special message to our students encouraging them all to "keep on rockin'!"

Special Gifts Theatre
presents



Save the Date in 2012 – for our presentation of 'GREASE!'

March 3, 4, 10, and 11 at 2 pm, The Skokie School, Winnetka

Field of Dreams

With hearts of gratitude, we thank Founder Susie Field for her vision, talent, and perseverance. After 11 years of dedication, we humbly accept her resignation, knowing that she has created a legacy that is bigger than any of us could ever have imagined. Refusing to let SGT stay as a dream in her mind, together with her family, years of hard work, and a never ending passion, she brought Special Gifts Theatre to the stage. Through the creation of SGT, thousands of children with special needs have been given a chance to shine. Susie says it best in her own words:

"The journey we have all taken together has been an amazing one! Starting with only six children and a staff of two in the year 2000, we grew to a staff of 60, serving hundreds of children and peer mentors and reaching audiences of over 16,000 people.

As I prepare to enter another phase of my own life, I can promise you that I will always be emotionally connected to SGT, as well as the friends, families, staff, and volunteers that have forever touched my life. It has been an honor and a privilege to take this amazing journey with you."

What better way to thank Susie, than to create a lasting legacy. The FIELD of DREAMS fund has been created to continue Susie's vision through scholarships for our families in financial need, providing therapeutic services and for program expansion.

If you would like to donate to this fund please write Field of Dreams on the memo line of your check. In receipt of this donation, you will receive a personal thank you from one of our children benefitting from your donation! Remember, any donations to SGT are tax deductible!

Double Your Dollars!



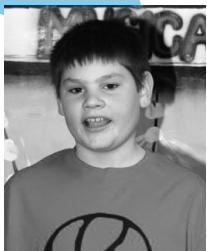
Did you know a challenge grant is available that will match any new or increased donation to SGT? If you have never donated to SGT before (or in the past two years) your donation will double. If you have donated, any amount you give over and above your previous donation will also be matched. What a great way to stretch your dollars!

Save the Date – Sunday, October 23

Let's "Rock-In" the 2011-2012 season with our **First Annual Fall Fling Fundraising Event!** More details to come!

A Parent Perspective

Meet My Son John... a Student...



John was diagnosed at an early age as developmentally delayed including speech apraxia; a motor speech disorder resulting in him having a difficult time saying sounds, syllables and words. So when his school informed us about Special Gifts Theatre as an opportunity, we were curious as to how they would adapt to his special needs. Little did we know...

John was one of the first early childhood performers in Special Gifts Theatre. His first production was Music Man when he was just five years old. His participation required a great deal of assistance from the Special Gifts team of therapists. During the first year, he had a difficult time focusing during practices, transitioning on and offstage, interacting, making friends as well as comprehending the story and music. But on the day of the performance John shined! He proudly wore his costume, marched on stage and participated in the song and dance routines with wonderful assistance from his peer mentor. Eight years later John has blossomed in the program receiving larger roles, has his own speaking lines and even escorted Cinderella to the ball!

We have seen how John's experience with SGT has impacted him beyond the stage and in the classroom at school. His self confidence has grown ten-fold! He has participated more actively in his music class including performing in all of the school musical assemblies without an aide or assistance from his teachers.

SGT would not be able to provide this opportunity for John without the wonderful support from donors in the community. Please join us in supporting Special Gifts Theatre to help make this year's production of Grease another smashing success while helping to impact other kids like John! Your donation will even go farther with the challenge grant we have in place!

Meet My Son Asher... a Peer Mentor...



Asher saw his first SGT performance when he was in third grade and knew immediately that he wanted to be a part of the program. He became a mentor the following year and has been with the program ever since – now in his sixth year.

To mark the occasion of his becoming a bar mitzvah, Asher chose to educate and involve his friends in his work with SGT. Following the bar mitzvah service, Asher's friends and family were invited to assemble informational packets about the program, paint sections of the set and decorate banners for the auditorium. Instead of gifts, Asher requested that guests make donations to SGT, raising over \$15,000 for the program.

Asher's experience with SGT certainly extends to his life outside the program. At middle school he was often the one that teachers and aides looked to for support of children with special needs and he plans to continue serving in that capacity in high school. Patience and empathy are values and skills taught at home, but definitely enhanced by participating in SGT. What Asher likes most about his time with SGT is feeling that he is making a difference.

And he sure is making a difference! Our Peer Mentor/Buddy Program includes typically developing individuals ages 7-18. This wonderful experience has proven to extend beyond the walls of SGT, as friendships, understanding and respect grow on a daily basis. Please help make your difference with a donation to our program today.

In the Spotlight

Kids Helping Kids Program

Do you know someone who needs to do a service project? Needs community service hours? Wants to make a difference? Have them contact SGT! We do have opportunities that are available throughout the year. A special thank you to **Sarah Aiken, Lindsey Byster, Dani Harkvay** and **Sarah Rutstein** who collectively raised over \$10,000 for our programs due to their fundraising efforts throughout the year!

Be a Corporate Sponsor

SGT is pleased to announce that corporate sponsorship packages are available. A special thank you to Storage-Mart and Gem Printing who are one of the first to sponsor our program for the 2011-2012 season. Please consider this level of support to continue to enrich the lives of these children. Please email info@specialgiftstheatre.com or call 847-564-7704 to receive your corporate brochure today!

District 219 Supports SGT

We are thrilled to announce that District 219 (Niles North & West High Schools) has selected SGT as the beneficiary of their fundraising efforts during the 2011-2012 school year! We are pleased to be working with these young adults who are so eager to help support and participate in our programs. Thank you District 219!

Macy's Shop for a Cause

Special Gifts Theatre is participating in Macy's 6th Annual Shop for A Cause. You can support SGT by purchasing a shopping pass for \$5.00 and 100% of the proceeds benefit SGT! This shopping pass is good at any Macy's location and allows guests to receive 25% off any regular, sale and clearance merchandise throughout the store on Saturday, August 27. To purchase your pass please contact Ruth at lenasmom@sbcglobal.net.