

# SPECIAL GIFTS THEATRE'S MUSICAL THEATRE LIBERTYVILLE ALADDIN PERFORMANCE

BY MAUREEN BRANDWEIN

On February 8th and 9th, Special Gifts Theatre's (SGT) Musical Theatre Libertyville cast delivered a captivating performance of *Aladdin* at Copeland Manor Elementary School. The actors delighted the audience with their energy and enthusiasm, bringing the story to life. The production featured 23 student actors supported by 21 dedicated peer mentors, many of whom attend Libertyville High School and Carmel High School. SGT is grateful for its ongoing partnership with District 70 and the opportunity to perform at Copeland Manor Elementary School.

## The Power of the Peer Mentor Program

A key component of SGT's Musical Theatre Program is its peer mentor program, which plays a vital role in the success of its actors. One such mentor, Nina Landvick, a senior at Libertyville High School, has been involved since the program began in Libertyville in 2018. During *Aladdin*, she had the chance to share her experience with the audience.

"Through SGT, I have learned that I love working with these kids. They bring me so much joy and seeing them up here doing something they love and knowing I was a small part of making that happen is the most rewarding thing ever. So because of that I have decided that I want to do this for the rest of my life. So next year I will be attending college to start my journey of getting my Doctorate in Occupational Therapy. I wouldn't have ever figured out that's what I wanted to do with my life if it wasn't for this program. I am forever grateful" Nina expressed.

Nina is just one of many peer mentors whose time with Special Gifts Theatre has inspired them to pursue careers in special education and related fields.

## Celebrating 25 Years of Inclusion

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Special Gifts Theatre. Founded in 2000 by Susie Field with just eight students in



Northbrook, SGT has since grown into a thriving organization. Today, it offers three core programs across the Chicagoland area:

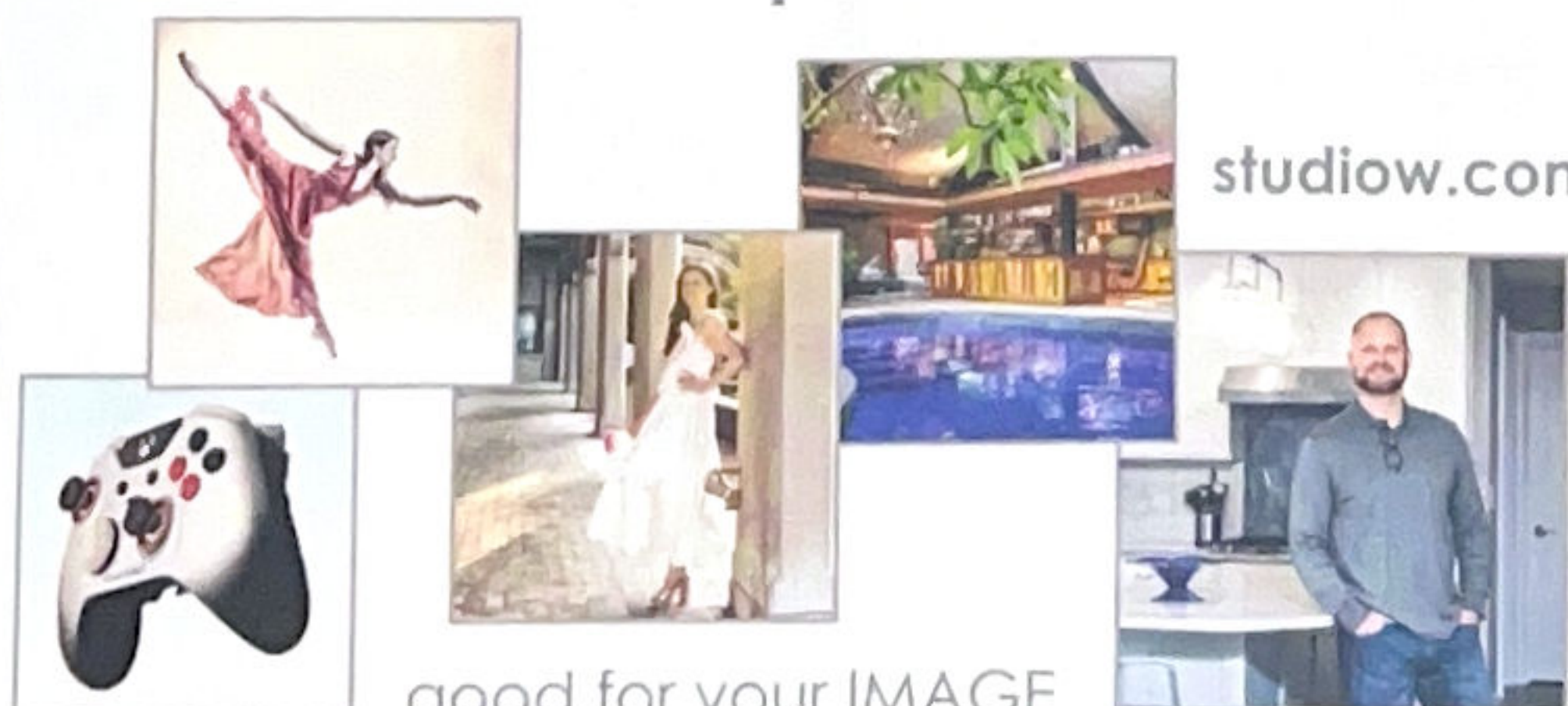
- Creativity in Motion (ages 7+)
- Musical Theatre (ages 10-22)
- Creating Outside the Lines (ages 22+)

This season SGT has seven venues and 13 live performances, with the participation of 354 student actors and peer mentors. As the organization celebrates this milestone, its goals remain focused on expanding access for individuals with disabilities, providing financial assistance to ensure no one is turned away, and continuing its commitment to high-quality programming.

## See Special Gifts Theatre in Action

Don't miss Special Gifts Theatre's upcoming performance at Libertyville Days this June! For more information or to purchase tickets for other performances this spring, visit [www.specialgiftstheatre.org](http://www.specialgiftstheatre.org). You can also contact SGT at [info@specialgiftstheatre.org](mailto:info@specialgiftstheatre.org) or call 847-564-7704.

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