

TUCSON GIVING

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Musical theater offers tuition-free, inclusive educational programs

LONI NANNINI
Special to the Arizona Daily Star

Musical theater is for everyone, and for the last year, Saguaro City Music Theatre has opened its doors — and its stage — to make that mantra a reality through education and professional performances.

"We have been able to create four educational programs that are tuition-free and inclusive, including a summer camp. These have served more than 100 students," said Dena DiGiacinto, director of outreach and education for the nonprofit theater company. "We have an incredible amount of diversity among our students in every way imaginable. In the Clean Slate Program we started last July, about 14% of students had a diagnosis or disability and we are trying to work up to 50%," she said.

She credits the success of the Saguaro City Studio Arts educational programming to support from local partners such as the Children's Clinics and the University of Arizona School of Theatre, Film and Television, as well as sponsors including the Kautz Family Foundation, the Sakiyama Family Foundation, Don & Maryam Ferguson and Watermark for Kids. DiGiacinto said the sponsors are aligned in the mission to provide children with all abilities access to the arts.

"They allow us to offer our educational programs tuition-free. The incredible thing about removing financial barriers with these classes is that it equalizes the field of opportunity for many children who otherwise wouldn't be able to take classes outside of their school curriculums. These sponsors are a major catalyst for all we have been able to create," she said.

On the production side, the professional company has produced two full-scale musicals, "It's a Wonderful Life — A Live Radio Play" and "Seussical the Musical," which integrated summer camp participants and veteran performers. The theater for young audiences' production of "Seussical" welcomed a sold-out finale.

In the upcoming "Little Shop of Horrors," the professional company will stage a fresh interpretation of the original Broadway production and cult-classic film version. Greg Knopf is lead production sponsor.

"This is such a classic in film and live theatre, and we are getting more buzz than with anything we have done so far. We are super excited," said DiGiacinto, choreographer for the production.

She and her colleagues are gratified by the momentum they have built.



SAGUARO CITY MUSICAL THEATRE

Teachers work with students in the most recent Saguaro City Studio Arts Educational Academy Clean Slate program, covering the basics of musical theatre through music, movement and text. The upcoming "Showtime—A Musical Theatre Journey from Studio to Stage," offers tuition-free, inclusive classes for ages 7 to 17. Registration is available online at <https://www.saguarcity.org/studioarts>.

If you go

To support the nonprofit Saguaro City Music Theatre and Saguaro City Studio Arts educational academy:

What: "Showtime!" — a musical theater journey from studio to stage for ages 7 to 17.

When: Registration is ongoing through Sept. 2 and is limited to 35 participants. Classes will be held on Saturdays, Sept. 9, 16 and 23; and Sundays, Sept. 10, 17 and 24.

Where: Pima Community College Center for the Arts, 2202 W. Anklam Road.

Cost: Free; register at saguarcity.org/studioarts.

"Showtime" teaches children and youth the basics about musical theater: scripts, choreography, singing, storytelling and a range of other topics, culminating in a musical

"The growth of Saguaro City this past year has felt like an embrace from the community encouraging us to do more and offer more. It's nice to reach out and feel Tucson reaching back," said Drew Hum-

phrey, artistic director of Saguaro City Music Theatre.

production performance for friends and family. The program is built on diversity and inclusion and welcomes children of all backgrounds, cultures and skill levels — from beginners to Broadway-bound — and all abilities, including those with special needs. For more information or registration, or to make an online donation to support the cause, visit saguarcity.org.

What: "Little Shop of Horrors" professional musical production.

When: Oct. 13 through Oct. 29.

Where: The Berger Performing Arts Center, 1200 W. Speedway.

Cost: Tickets begin at \$25 per person; reduced rates are available for groups and preview performances. Tickets can be purchased at saguarcity.org/tickets.

Contact freelance writer Loni Nannini at ninch2@comcast.net

Program helps improve fundraising for nonprofits

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SVP Tucson is in search of eight local nonprofits looking to hone their promotion skills — while also generating new avenues for fundraising and friend-raising — by joining the Fast Pitch Class of 2024.

The free five-month program offers participating nonprofits comprehensive training in the creation of marketing strategies, capacity building and public speaking. Participants also receive mentorship from community leaders and assistance with creating donor connections.

The centerpiece of the course is the Main Event, in which nonprofits will vie for more than \$100,000 in on-stage grants through three-minute "pitches" on Tuesday, March 26, at the Fox Tucson Theatre.

The Main Event has evolved into a much-anticipated annual showcase that brings the community together to transform local nonprofits, according to Brittany Battle, director of Fast Pitch.

"We have elevated our Main Event in order to truly spotlight the work of our nonprofit organizations and share their stories with a global audience of people who deeply care about creating change. This night has the power to connect people, build bridges in the community and direct resources where they are needed the most. It will also be a beautiful night out on the town in our historic Fox Theatre," said Battle.

To be considered for the program, nonprofits must be aligned with at least one of SVP's 2Gen (Two-Generation) Values dedicated to impacting multiple generations of Tucsonans. The 2 Gen strategies seek to support nonprofits on the front lines as they create social change.

SVP will host a Writing Workshop to assist prospective nonprofits with applications from 9 to 11 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 22, at the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona, 5049 E Broadway Blvd., #201.

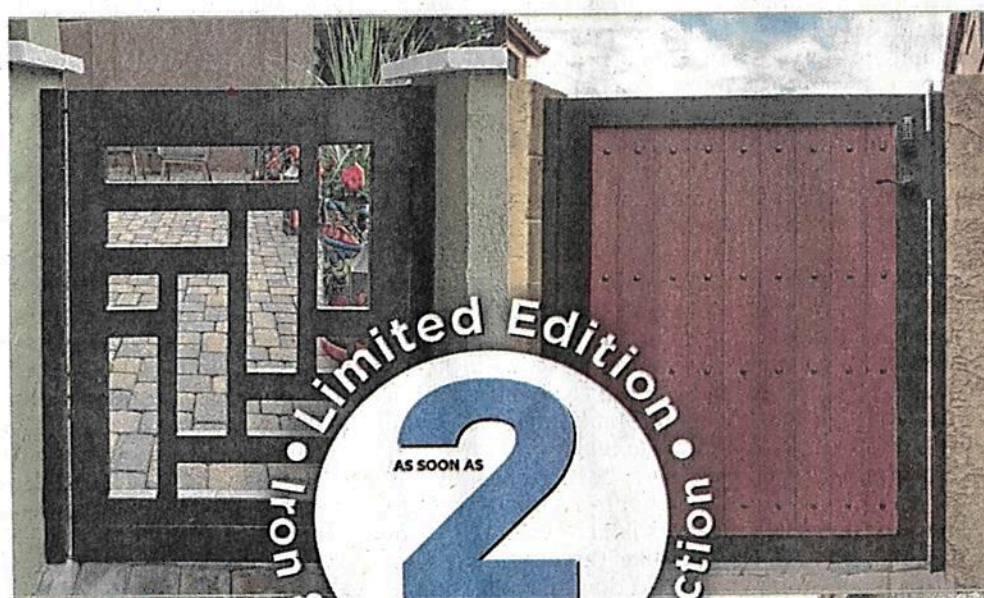
Visit <http://tucne.ws/1o0f> for details and more information.

Interested nonprofits must submit applications by 5 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 15.

Contact freelance writer Loni Nannini at ninch2@comcast.net

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