Special VIP Celebration

TRANSFORMATIONS

Summer Theater Academy students invest in the future of First Stage!

This past summer, over 1,700 students learned life skills through stage skills at First Stage’s Summer Academy. Throughout the years, many inspiring young people have come through our doors and have done incredible things for the place they love. In 1998, a group of young people created the First Stage cheer, which is still enthusiastically recited each and every morning of the Summer Academy. In 1999, after hearing testimonials for years about how some of her peers could attend First Stage only because of need-based scholarships, one student realized that their collective efforts could make a real difference and began the fundraising initiative, Kid-to-Kid. This summer, one amazing student came up with an extraordinary way to raise additional funds for the Kid-to-Kid scholarship fund.

Natalie Alteri, who has been taking Academy classes for eight years, kicked off the summer by making bows and selling them for donations. She understands the challenges of being a non-profit organization and has friends who attend Summer Academy because of scholarships, and she wanted to do something to help. “We’ve (First Stage) never turned anyone away because of an inability to pay. People really respect that. We are committed to our community; it’s not just a business.”

This idea came easily to Natalie, who has been transformed by her experiences at First Stage. “No one can define or pinpoint what makes First Stage unique. It’s different than anywhere else. First Stage encourages you to be the best version of yourself, to be bold, and even when you fail, do it boldly.” Natalie made 40 bows to start, which sold out in the first week. By the end of the summer 300 bows were sold and $450 was donated to Kid-to-Kid.

Natalie says, “I found good in theater and it has done a lot in my life.” She is currently a high school sophomore and wants to be an eye doctor when she grows up. “I don’t want to go into theater but it will always be a part of my life and I plan on supporting it as best I can.” She wants other people outside the organization to know that the students are working hard to ensure First Stage’s success, and that “the people who are a part of First Stage really care about this place.”
A Note From The Managing Director

Dear First Stage family,

As supporters of First Stage, you are very much a part of a “family” here. You have made a connection with us that is important to you, and you have shown that by making a contribution to First Stage. As a “family,” it’s this relationship that is most important to us. Within this newsletter, we hope you learn a little bit more about others—like you—who have forged a special and meaningful relationship with First Stage. In many ways, this newsletter is our way to share our stories with you, to tell you how your support makes a difference in the lives of just one child, one family, one school or—multiplied in the lives of thousands! We hear many—sometimes on a daily basis—accounts of how First Stage has transformed lives. We love to hear them, because then we know we have made that important connection.

I would love to hear from you on how First Stage has either impacted your life, be it through your child or grandchild attending the Theater Academy, or participation in one of our in-school character education programs such as “Bully Ban,” or what the shared experience of attending a First Stage play has meant to your family. Whatever it is, please feel free to share your story with us! You may contact me at bcorry@firststage.org, or at (414) 267-2990.

Thank you, to all of our First Stage family, for making these stories possible.

All the best,

Betsy Corry, Managing Director

Introducing the
First Stage Legacy Society

First Stage recently created the First Stage Legacy Society to encourage and recognize people who have included First Stage as a beneficiary of a planned gift through a will, charitable trust, retirement plan or life insurance policy. With support from Legacy Society members, First Stage will create long-term sustainability for our transformational theater programming for the next generations of young theater audiences.

Legacy Giving to First Stage Made Simple

By: Michael G. May
Mr. May is an estate planning attorney in Mequon, Wisconsin.

Many First Stage donors contribute annually to the general fund as a demonstration of passion for children’s theater. In addition to these gifts, there are ways to make planned or “legacy” gifts that support First Stage’s mission over the long term. Some, such as naming First Stage as beneficiary under a will or trust, require a visit to a lawyer. However, there are other more straightforward ways to make a legacy gift. They include:

Multi-Year Pledge. A legacy gift can be as simple as a larger gift commitment phased in over time or payable at a later date. This enables First Stage to plan for the future with greater certainty. The gift can be in the form of cash, mutual funds, or other assets.

Life Insurance Beneficiary Designation. Naming First Stage as a beneficiary under a life insurance policy may result in a larger gift than would otherwise be possible. This is because the proceeds payable at death typically are larger than the total premiums paid. The mechanics involve the filing of a beneficiary form with the insurance company; whereby First Stage someday receives a portion of the death benefit. A group life policy provided through work is perfect for such a gift.

IRA or 401(k) Beneficiary Designation. Family members pay income taxes when they inherit and withdraw from IRAs and 401(k)s accounts—not so when a charitable organization inherits the funds. By naming First Stage as a beneficiary of the account, the entire designated amount is put to work (without income tax) in support of First Stage when received. The funds may be made payable upon the account owner’s death, or upon death of the primary beneficiary (such as a husband or wife).

To explore these ideas, contact Katie Weeks at (414) 267-2936 or kweeks@firststage.org who can help structure a legacy gift that will allow First Stage to continue transforming lives through theater.

From LYLE, LYLE, CROCODILE to Co-Chairing the First Stage Wine Event – One Family’s Journey with First Stage

Autumn is here, which brings First Stage’s popular Wine Tasting and Dinner on October 26, 2013. The event’s co-chairs, Gregory and Janet Schmelings, have been involved with First Stage for almost 17 years. We spoke with the Schmelings about their connection with First Stage and their passion for the mission.

…we were part of the First Stage family.

Like many donors, the Schmelings’ involvement with First Stage started with a show in 1996:
“...we were part of the First stage family.

From that performance, the family’s connection to First Stage grew stronger:
“...we were part of the First stage family.

We love what our children learned through First Stage, in the classroom or as a performer; respect, collaboration, responsibility, sharing, and generosity. Children can be themselves and be accepted. And, of course, it is fun!

We attended our first Make Believe Ball, and joined the Board of Directors, in 2006. Our latest endeavor is chairing the annual Wine Tasting and Dinner event.”

The family’s time, energy, and talent has helped First Stage in numerous ways. For the Schmelings, the feeling is mutual:
“...we were part of the First stage family.

First Stage is grateful for friends like the Schmelings in our community, too. Thank you for your generous support over the years!