When I first agreed to take on directing A Little Princess, I had never heard of the story before. After I had read the play, I'll admit, I was not instantly taken with it. As it got closer to auditions I decided to pick up the original book, Sara Crewe by Frances Hodgson Burnett, from which our script is based and give it a read. The pure imagination of Sara was simply inspiring and I was able to look at the play in a new way. When a situation seems grim, taking the time to see the best in it is a lesson everyone can learn. As auditions were going on, there were countless parents and members of the community who would come and say to me, “Oh, I remember this story from when I was a child!” and they would rave about the way that it affected their lives. That is what sparked my fuel for this show, knowing that there were so many people who truly loved this story and couldn’t wait to see how the youth members, both on and off stage, would bring this story of imagination and tenacity alive.

I was honored to have an amazing team of youth for this show. Shelby Brewer was my absolutely phenomenal Assistant Director. During this show she was working towards her Master Badge in Directing for the first time. I am very aware of the fact that I can only teach so much by talking and a lot of what directing is just doing it. You do the thing, and it doesn’t work, so you try something else. Or you do the thing and it does work, so you keep it in mind for the next time you direct. I blocked the first act of A Little Princess, and Shelby blocked the second act. In rehearsals, I made the decision to let her take lead in all of the directing; and she not only brought together an amazing show, but has also grown leaps and bounds in the director chair! (Continued on Page 2)
I was lucky enough to also have a fantastic stage management team! Anna Szabo, who is new to AECT (and already wants to be involved again!!), was my Stage Manager and Ellison Winterstein was my Assistant Stage Manager. Ellison is not new to AECT, but he is new to the Stage Manager track – and he nailed it! Stage Managing can be a very, very stressful job and one that very rarely is appreciated or even seen. A stage manager is the one that sets up the sign in/out table, keep track of all the youth at rehearsals, call those late or missing, read in for missing actors, help the actors when lines are due, check in with all the crews, and during shows they are the ones backstage calling the lights and sound cues, making sure actors are in place, and most likely helping with the scene changes. They are the closest the theatre world has to true super heroes, and Ellison and Anna most surely fit the title.

As always, we also had an amazing collective of tech crew heads who have helped make this production the wonderful experience it has been. As well as a very cohesive cast and crew that have been working tirelessly for the past two months to make our first show of the 28th season an enjoyable one! I hope you will all come see the show and support all the hard work that has gone into bringing it to the stage. I hope that you will walk away from the show with the reminder that making the best of your situation only takes a little bit of jam, a good book and an even better friend.
AECT Grants News

All-of-us Express Children’s Theatre has been awarded a grant of $12,500 from the State of Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA). The grant was awarded through the MCACA peer review process and was one of 559 applications to compete for MCACA fiscal year 2017 funding.

Organizations receiving a MCACA grant are required to match those funds with other public and private dollars. Local support of the project included Jackson National Life Insurance Company, Capital Region Community Foundation, Ingham County Hotel/Motel Arts and Tourism Tax Fund, local businesses and private individuals. In-kind services and supports are provided by the AECT Nonprofit Board and members totaling $6500 last year including grant writing, and show photography. In addition the AECT Board supports wishes to thank hundreds of hours of volunteer work done by members including fundraising, outreach, providing consultant work in areas of expertise, assisting in maintaining AECT program supplies and supporting the shows by helping out backstage and in the lobby as needed.

The MCACA peer review process allows for each grant application to be competitively considered by a panel of in-state and out-of-state arts and culture professionals. This ensures the taxpayers, who support this project through legislative appropriations, and all other visitors or residents in Michigan will have access to the highest quality arts and cultural experiences.

A complete list of grant awards around the state is available by contacting MCACA at (517) 241-4011, or by visiting the MCACA website at:


Melissa Downs, AECT Grants Chair
downsmelissa@comcast.net

AECT Awarded Scripps Howard Foundation Grant.

All-of-us Express was the fortunate recipient of a $1000 grant from the Scripps Howard Foundation and Fox News 47. The award will be used for the upcoming production of Number the Stars which will be on stage in February 2017. The Scripps Howard Foundation and Fox News 47 are awarding local nonprofits that promote youth and performing arts.
The AECT Nonprofit Board Raises Funds Through Record Sales

This fall at the Hannah Community Center, the AECT nonprofit board conducted a fundraiser on Saturday, September 17th. Andy Callis, who is on the board, used his networks to secure record vendors that brought their collection to sell to customers. Funds were raised by the record vendors paying a nominal fee for their "table" and each customers paying an entry fee to pursue the records available to purchase.

At the end of the day, $360 dollars was raised for AECT. A big thank you to board members who donated coffee and donuts. A bigger thank you to Andy for organizing the event. Way to go Andy!
All-of-us Express Children’s Theatre Youth Join the Pumpkin Walk

By Cynthia Wright-Pratt

The City of East Lansing businesses hosted a Pumpkin Walk on Thursday, October 27th and All-of-us Express Children’s Theatre (AECT) youth got in on the fun.

Al Bay, Innkeeper was generous to allow AECT to be part of the extravaganza to act as munchkins, hand out candy and promote our show, “The Little Princess”. To say that Al goes over the top with the Wizard of Oz theme is an understatement. Al provides all the costumes, transforms the Inn into the land of Oz, has a, “Please Feed the Animals” wall where the trick or treaters feed puppet animals carrots and has all the Wizard of Oz characters present including Glenda the Good Witch, Scarecrow, Lion, Tinman, Wicked Witch, the Wizard of Oz, Dorothy and of course, Toto.

Ben Winnie and Eli Hepfer (picture, left) happily played munchkins in the Lolli-Pop Guild along with the rest of the Wizard of Oz cast at the Wild Goose Inn on Ann Street. Ben and Eli were very creative about how they handed out candy using their giant lollipops as a prop to distribute treats. They were tireless in their role and participated with gusto.

With the weather cooperating, the event lasted two hours and approximately 800 kids in various costumes came through. All the remaining “Little Princess” bookmarks were handed out. Let’s hope some of the trick or treaters come to see our show!
AECT Board Notes
AECT Nonprofit Board Supports and Promotes AECT

As All-of-us Express Children’s Theatre (AECT) enters its 28th season, the AECT Nonprofit Board is working behind the scenes to support and promote the AECT Program. Starting in 1989, the AECT Nonprofit Corporation has served the youth of the greater Lansing area with its mission, “To offer young people of all backgrounds, cultures, and lifestyles the opportunity to produce professional quality plays, study many aspects of the dramatic arts, and develop valuable life skills while providing outstanding entertainment to the community.” The AECT Board of Trustees is the body which administers the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

At the AECT Annual Board Meeting on September 20th four new board members were voted onto the board. Christine Fisk, Adrienne Yates, Shannon Bowen joined the board bringing new perspective, talent and ideas. Morgan Pohl transitioned from a Youth Representative to an adult member of the board. Ellison Winterstein and Shelby Brewer are serving as Youth Representatives. Both Ellison and Shelby are voting members of the board. Katie Brewer was voted as Board President. Todd Vanderbur and Cynthia Wright were voted to continue serving as Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Other board members continuing their terms are Melissa Downs, Andy Callis and Sara Frank-Hepfer. Board member bios can be viewed on the AECT website at: www.allofusexpress.org/organization/

The AECT Board has three major functions to recruit, grow and maintain the membership of the AECT Nonprofit. Specific roles of the board include outreach; financial support for the programs, activities and performances; serving in an advisory capacity; and promoting the AECT Strategic Plan goals and objectives.

The board has provided financial support to the AECT program since 1989 and continues to do so today. Funds are raised through grant writing, sponsorships, donations, fundraisers, and memberships. Since merging with the City of East Lansing Parks & Recreation Program in 2009, the AECT Board contributes funds to the City of East Lansing AECT Program. These funds go toward the cost of show productions (props, costumes, tech, sets, makeup, scripts, etc.), space at the Hannah Center (theatre rental, rehearsal space, first read space, audition space, etc.) and contributing to the cost of AECT staff (Artistic Director and the Assistant Artistic Director). In addition, the AECT Board financially supports scholarships for youth to participate in AECT, professional memberships and professional training for AECT program staff. To date, the contribution that the AECT nonprofit has contributed to the City is over $200,000.

Presently the AECT Board is renegotiating the merger agreement between the AECT Nonprofit Corporation and the City of East Lansing. These negotiations have been ongoing for several months.

Board members are volunteers and serve mission of AECT as a labor of love. Many in-kind contributions have been made by board members that are too many to count but include, photography, grant writing and providing expertise.

The AECT Board is always recruiting new members. If you are interested in serving on the board, talk to any board member or email us at: board@allofusexpress.org
AECT Board Notes

AECT Committee Consideration

Are you looking for a way to give back to the theater you love? Do you have ideas that will make All-
of-us Express Children’s Theatre even better? The AECT Board has several committees that meet on
a monthly basis that need people to share their talents. These committees help support the theatre
and are important to our continued success. You do not need to be a member of the board to serve
on a committee.

Please consider joining one of the following committees:

**Operations Committee** - Deals with theatre personnel, bylaws, policies and procedures and board
nominations.

**Membership Committee** - Deals with AECT membership application, benefits, emails, addresses,
alumni, events and planning for the annual meeting.

**Fundraising Committee** - Deals with grants, donations, sponsorships and fundraising events.

**Communications and Outreach** - Deals with marketing, website, social media, newsletter and out-
reach.

Please contact the All-of-us Express board by emailing us at board@allofusexpress.org for more infor-
mation.

New AECT Website

The All-of-express board begins the 28th Season with a brand new redesigned website! Please
check out the new website at allofusexpress.org. On the website, you will find information about:

- How to get involved
- Upcoming auditions and shows
- Forms
- Membership
- Sponsorship
- AECT Board and Committees
- History of AECT
- Photos

All of us Express can also be found on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. You can contact the
AECT board by emailing us at board@allofusexpress.org.
The Picture Page — Peter Pan Edition
Want to help All-of-us Express, but don’t have time to volunteer? Bring a small item to show your support!

*We will provide a tax donation letter, should it be desired.

**Wish List**

- Makeup Remover Wipes
- Kleenex
- Paper Towel
- Hair Ties
- Bobby Pins
- Cotton Squares
- Popsicle Sticks
- Hex-Head Screws
- Drill Bits
- Electric Tape
- Elastic (all sizes!)
- Interfacing
- Scotch Tape
- Wide (& Standard) Masking Tape
- Disinfectant Wipes
- Sewing Needles (hand and machine)
- Drawing Paper
- Seam Rippers
- Good-Quality Colored Pencils
- Fabric Scissors
- Large Fabric Pieces (no scraps)
- Men’s Boots (black and brown)
- Men’s Dress Shoes (sizes 9+)
  - Women’s Dress Shoes
  - Women’s Shoes (sizes 9+)
  - Button-down Shirts

**The BIG Gifts**

- Vise
- Cutting Table
- Home Depot Gift Card (doesn’t have to be big)
- Joann’s Gift Card (doesn’t have to be big)
Thank you for supporting All-of-us Express Children’s Theatre donation appeal. Your gift will help ensure that youth participants of all background, cultures, and lifestyles have opportunities to produce professional quality plays, study many aspects of the dramatic arts, and develop valuable life skills while providing outstanding entertainment to the community.

Please consider sponsoring one of the following:

- $25 - Will sponsor a family of four to attend a show without means to otherwise attend
- $50 - Will sponsor the cost of tech supplies for one show
- $100 - Will sponsor a child’s participation fees for one show
- $150 - Will sponsor the cost of advertising for one show
- $200 - Will sponsor the cost of props for four shows
- $250 - Will sponsor the cost of costumes for one show
- $500 - Will help sponsor the cost of royalties for one show
- $1000 - Will help sponsor the cost of the theatre rental for one show run

Name ______________________________________________________________

Address ____________________________________________________________

City _______________________________ State______ Zip_________________

I/We would like our gift to be in honor/memory of: (circle one)

Name: ______________________________________________________________

_____ I/We would like our gift to remain anonymous.

Donations can be mailed to: AECT, P.O. Box 1871, East Lansing, MI 48826-1871

All-of-us Express Children’s Theatre is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your donation is tax deductible.