



Helen Doria Arts in the Park Nomination

David Romito

708.354.4580

[dromito@communityparkdistrict.org](mailto:dromito@communityparkdistrict.org)

In the last three years, The Community Park District of La Grange Park has seen a dramatic increase in participation and community enthusiasm with regards to their Performing Arts program, specifically, children's theatre. After multiple attempts to integrate a successful theatre program, the Community Park District decided to create "The Footlight Players of La Grange Park". The program brought in a fresh approach and creative vision through Directors Dee Hamilton and Dave Romito. The first musical performance they undertook had twelve children participate. Five shows later, we have over 250 children auditioning for one of the most successful children's theatre programs in the Chicago suburbs.

Because the Performing Arts program became so successful so fast, the Park District created a full time position to accommodate its needs and oversee all of its functions, as well as to ensure the continuing growth of all such programs. This new position has created numerous improvements to the program, including adding additional classes/programs, developing bigger productions to include more participants, creating space to house props and equipment, and converting administrative materials and processes into electronic availability to make the program more accessible and convenient to the community and staff. We have partnered and sustained relationships with many different high schools, park districts, teaching artists, and surrounding businesses to ensure the quality and integrity of our programs remains unmatched. Through these relationships, we have been able to include more innovative programming including a 10-minute play festival, a summer stock theatre camp, a summer concert series focusing on an avenue for new and aspiring musicians within the community, an audition workshop, and a children's talent show.

The Community Park District of La Grange Park has over 100 volunteers involved in all aspects of our performing arts programming. Responsibilities include set construction, costume design, painting, and sound design, to ticket sales, marketing, and assisting with our participants and internal program needs. The performing arts program has ensured easy access to people from all walks of life wanting to be involved or having interest in any of our programs and activities. Our performing arts program works closely with Seaspar (special needs agency) in providing new opportunities for their clientele and assisting the park district as needed by participants.

Many other programs at the park district benefit from our performing arts programs. Our Ready Teddy preschool integrates music, song, and dance into their curriculum, culminating into classroom productions and showcases throughout the year. The performing arts programs also provide entertainment for non-theatrical programs such as our Senior Club, park district seminars, special events, and community workshops.

The Community Park District of La Grange Park offers a variety of artistic opportunities and experiences across multiple disciplines including a successful dance program with 135 participants, music programs, concert series, talent shows, and numerous theatre productions, including musical theatre and mystery theatre. We have filled a community need, impacted our youth, thrilled audiences, and instilled confidence and self-esteem to each and every one of our participants. The impact of our curriculum has had a profound effect on the community and surrounding towns as far as 18 miles away. Our participants are enthusiastic, grateful, and excited to be a part of our programs, and with our continued growth and expansion, we have provided an opportunity for residents and non-residents alike, to experience affordable activities that weren't previously made available in the community.

Our commitment as a Park District is to serve the needs of our residents and to provide recreational activities that appeal to a broad range of ages and interests. We actively seek community responses about our programs so that we can continue to come up with new ideas to make our programs grow and prosper. Our programming is open to all ethnic and cultural backgrounds as part of our mission statement. We strive for excellence and continue looking for new ways to flourish and grow our performing arts program to heighten the appeal to our entire community.