



Current Bellevue Youth Theatre



## Bellevue Youth Theatre transforms the lives of young people

The Bellevue Youth Theatre gives young people of all abilities and backgrounds the chance to connect, grow and shine by creating theatre productions everyone can enjoy.

As one of the only free youth performing arts programs in the country, this exceptional program transforms the lives of young people by embracing social and cultural diversity and enabling individuals to build self-esteem and confidence. The Bellevue Youth Theatre is proud of its community roots and its service of youth, families, people with disabilities, and older adults in Bellevue and in other Eastside communities as well.

Established nearly 20 years ago in the Crossroads area, this recreational theatre program is driven by a uniquely inclusive vision. Unlike other theatre programs nationwide, the Bellevue Youth Theatre gives a role to everyone who auditions. This approach successfully

engages young people while integrating community members and creating entertaining, quality theatre productions. It teaches young people new skills as they discover their talents and express their creativity.

Interest in our program has increased rapidly, doubling in size from 2004 to 2008, outgrowing the current space which was not designed to accommodate these numbers. Today the Bellevue Youth Theatre stands poised to grow into a new home where it can serve the community for another generation.

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“ *Bellevue Youth Theatre provides opportunities for kids who may have never had such an opportunity to grow in character, confidence and self-esteem through the art of theatre. Literally, BYT makes every kid a star.* ”

Jubilee Reach Director - Partner Organization

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## We have strong community support

The Bellevue Youth Theatre Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2002 to provide volunteers, fundraising and community engagement for this outstanding program. Administered by the City of Bellevue Parks and Community Services, the Bellevue Youth

Theatre exists as a true public-private partnership.

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*“ We are proud to support the City’s Bellevue Youth Theatre program. It’s a jewel that adds richness and depth to our community.”*

James H. Pratt, President,  
Bellevue Youth Theatre Foundation

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Volunteers make this work possible, connecting the theatre to the community and supporting theatre operations with more than 10,000 hours of contributed time each year. With support from many dedicated volunteers, the Foundation has helped to enhance the quality of the program through funding items such as costumes and lighting equipment, and has helped to extend the

reach of the program through scholarships.

The Bellevue Youth Theatre Foundation has committed to a capital campaign to invest in the future of the program. With significant support from the City of Bellevue and the 2008 Parks Levy, the Bellevue Youth Theatre’s new home will incorporate sustainable and green design elements in a space designed specifically for its programs. This new home will also give the program room to grow, and serve the needs of Seattle’s Eastside arts community.



## We support a diverse artistic community where everyone can belong

The Bellevue Youth Theatre began as an outreach program for disenfranchised youth—and because these youth often lack the resources and opportunities available to other children, they remain our focus.

Young people who are struggling in their lives can discover their innate

strengths and talents through participation in a creative, collaborative activity.

With this focus on mind, we aim to meet the needs of all youth participants by forming a diverse community that supports and encourages everyone. Each year, the Bellevue Youth Theatre presents 10 productions that offer opportunities both for youth ages 11 to 19 and for other community members. Classic and original productions—from *Oklahoma* to *Girl Power*—explore universal themes and social issues. Their success has led more than 900 people to

participate each year and more than 10,000 to attend a performance.

We are an important grassroots catalyst for the arts, providing these additional services to the community:

- Year-round opportunities for participation through summer camps, educational workshops and myriad onstage and backstage experiences
- Production and rehearsal space for other arts groups when Bellevue Youth Theatre is not in production
- Technical assistance to Eastside groups, including school district theatres
- Incubator space for developing arts programs
- Mentoring opportunities through guest artists

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“ *Sustained student involvement in theater arts associates with a variety of developments for youth: gains in reading proficiency, gains in self concept and motivation, and higher levels of empathy and tolerance for others.* ”

Champions of Change Report: The Impact of the Arts on Learning – Arts Education Partnership

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## We are committed to building community that lasts

The Bellevue Youth Theatre serves a broad and growing community while modeling a visionary approach that can be replicated nationwide.

### Youth and Adults

Young people from diverse cultural, economic, and social backgrounds come together to create engaging theatre productions, learn life skills, and celebrate what is best within themselves. Families performing together create memorable experiences that deepen their

connections. Older adults share their knowledge and talents, contributing to and benefiting from the community experience.

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*“ The impact is transformational. Young actors and actresses have found a safe place in BYT to explore themselves in their own creative medium. ”*

Genevieve Tremblay, Arts Commissioner

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### Communities

Communities thrive with a rich mix of recreational and educational opportunities for all citizens to explore. The Bellevue Youth Theatre plays a vital role in creating future arts supporters and audiences by making theatre available and accessible to

the entire community. We welcome all who wish to participate and offer opportunities that do not exist elsewhere. We attract a wide and diverse range of participants by offering free participation to Bellevue youth and scholarships to economically disadvantaged youth and disabled persons in other Eastside communities.

### Society

Over our 20 years of operation, thousands of people have participated in this unique program. Involvement, particularly at a young age, in an activity that challenges, teaches and enlivens has a lasting impact on the people we become. Whether our participants go on to pursue careers in the arts or other fields, involvement in the Bellevue Youth Theatre brings out the best they can offer to the world.



## We don't turn anyone away

Creating excellent theatrical productions requires many of the ingredients that contribute to strong, healthy and productive communities. We do not take this role lightly – in fact, it informs everything we do.

The Bellevue Youth Theatre is dedicated to nurturing the potential within every young participant. We believe that investing in our youth is among the most important commitments we can make to the

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“ *The Bellevue Youth Theatre is open to anyone who walks through the door. Regardless of disability, ability, or what they look like. Everyone gets to come see our shows. Each one becomes a community treasure.* ”

James McClain -BYT Program Director

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future. That's why everyone who wishes to participate either receives a part and performs before a live audience, or has a role in technical production.

Through our productions, theatre camps and classes, the Bellevue Youth Theatre gives young people of all socioeconomic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds opportunities to express themselves, build self-confidence and develop occupational and life skills. Participation in theatre helps young people to develop public speaking and communication skills, instills

responsibility and teamwork, and broadens their world view.

At Bellevue Youth Theatre, meaningful roles support and expand the abilities of each individual and value every person's contribution. We not only offer uncommon performing arts opportunities to people with disabilities, we also incorporate older adults in performances with young people to create mentorship opportunities and give families a chance to perform together. Each production becomes a world where all individual talents are recognized and the collaborative result is celebrated.



## We foster the skills youth need to succeed

Theatre is an art form that teaches and entertains us through interpreting the human experience. Through creative teamwork and the art of storytelling, it creates shared experiences and stimulates personal development in ways that are not readily available in many other academic or athletic activities.

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*“ Programs incorporating the arts have proven to be educational, developmentally rich, and cost-effective ways to provide students the skills they need to be productive participants in today’s economy. ”*

*The Impact of Arts Education on Workforce Preparation Study*

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Theatre invites young people to learn about themselves and others while mastering a complex integration of elements—performance and language, design and storytelling, choreography and more. It is a highly cooperative endeavor that requires participants to trust one another and create a performance that transcends the individual. By involving the whole person intellectually, physically and emotionally, theatre makes it possible for all young people to engage, discover and flourish.

The Bellevue Youth Theatre provides this vital experience. It cultivates the leadership skills, discipline, teamwork and self-confidence youth need to succeed. According to a longitudinal study of 25,000 students conducted by the Department of Education, students with high levels of arts participation outperform “arts-poor” students by virtually every measure.

Today’s economy relies on a combination of academic knowledge and competency with foundation skills, including communication, personal and interpersonal relationships, problem solving, and management of organizational processes. The Bellevue Youth Theatre’s developmentally rich program fosters the skills youth need to be productive participants in tomorrow’s economy.



# BUILDING FOR Youth

## We need your help to meet the growing need

The Bellevue Youth Theatre has reached the capacity of our current facility at the former Ivanhoe School. Built in 1962, the space was not designed to accommodate the needs of a flourishing recreational theater program. Without proper dressing rooms, rehearsal space, offices, storage space, parking, lighting and other amenities, the theatre holds rehearsals in small classroom spaces, stores sets outdoors and uses workshops and closets as dressing rooms.

To continue providing innovative and successful arts and youth development programs, the Bellevue Youth Theatre needs a new home where it can grow.

With extraordinary support from the City of Bellevue and the 2008 Parks Levy, that new home is within reach. Now, the Bellevue Youth Theatre Foundation is leading a capital

campaign to raise an additional \$1.2 million still needed to complete the new theatre.

Adjacent to Bellevue's Crossroads Community Center, the new facility is designed to provide a "theatre in the round" experience and mirror the innovative spirit of the program. Built into the hillside, the structure features a green roof of earth and grass and will likely receive LEED-certification for its environmentally friendly design elements including water conservation, sustainable site planning and minimal impact on the existing park.

*“ Bellevue Youth Theater’s move to a new facility will also benefit the broader Eastside arts community, since their existing theater space will provide not only a space for the program’s continued growth, but will also be made available for arts incubator performance and rehearsal venues in Bellevue. Everybody wins! ”*

*Debra Twersky, 4 Culture*



The new building will allow the Bellevue Youth Theatre to double the number of program participants and significantly increase audience attendance. Renovations to the existing Ivanhoe facility will support the program's growth, and will also provide rehearsal and production space for emerging arts groups to grow and build their audiences, and further contribute to the strengthening of Eastside's arts community.

The campaign is an invitation to help make this vision a reality.

Your contribution will make it possible for youth to participate, learn and thrive for generations to come.



## Recognition of Quality

- Retired Senior Volunteer Program Award
- National Recreation and Parks Dorothy Mullen Arts Award
- State of Washington Governor's Arts Award
- Washington State Recreation and Parks Program Spotlight Award