

STORIES behind the seats

Claim your seat!

For \$100, a one-time tax-deductible donation, you can honor and/or remember someone special with an engraved nameplate on the armrest of a theater seat. The nameplate remains for the lifetime of the seat.

“Truth”
 “Kindness”
 “Compassion”
 “Determination”
 “Critical Thinking”

These are some inspired choice, foundational words of Steve and Lynn Schneider, the proud parents of runner Rachel Schneider, who will represent Sanford, Maine and the United States this month in Track & Field at the Olympics in Tokyo.

But here, inside SPAC, really every seat tells a story. Some seat markers share words of wisdom:

“Don’t wish for it, work for it.” from Superintendent of Sanford Schools Matt (and Neile) Nelson.

“Strive for progress, not perfection,” from Rebecca Patterson, in honor of Joshua Champagne. And “let the beauty of what you love be what you do,” in honor of Heather Hastings.

“Art is not what you see, but what you make others see,” a quote from Edgar Degas, shared by resident Greg Shaw, who chose a seat in the very last row, so others could enjoy a better view.

“Where words fail, music speaks,” wrote Judith Smith, in memory of Eddie Smith.

“There is nothing better than a live show,” added Jack Ballengerm, SHS Class of 1986.

“Live the life you have imagined,” shared retired Curriculum Director Bernie Flynn as once written by Henry David Thoreau.

Many nameplates remember a loved one, such as Joan Ritcher Frost by Deanna Farrell, “Your love of the arts now lives eternally.”

Some stories are inside jokes: “The Electric Chair / Sit At Your Own Risk,” wrote S. Perry and B. Kaplowitz

Some tell of local businesses and organizations that support the arts: the Sanford Football Program, for example, and the Sanford Mainers baseball team; also Town Square Realty Group, Brink Chiropractic Clinic. Appliance Pro, JP Construction and Genest Precast, among them.

Most every recent Sanford High School graduating class is represented — as a whole or individually.

Even Patrick McGinnis, SHS 1991

grad who coined the term “FOMO” in his best-selling book, overcame his “fear of missing out” and snagged a seat for his family: Robert ‘64, Sonia ‘69 | Mike ‘91, Patrick ‘94.

About three-quarters of the 860 seats have been claimed as part of the Sanford Performing Arts Center Have a Seat campaign. Launched in 2018 as the new school and stage were taking shape, the fund-raiser is administered by the Sanford Schools Legacy Foundation, with all donations directly supporting SPAC.

And with approximately 260 more seats to be sold, there are more stories to be told. It’s an especially poignant gift for 2021 graduates and recent retirees, though the opportunity is open to everyone.

“Where else do you get that kind of naming opportunity for \$100,” said Brett Williams, director of the Sanford Performing Arts Center. “We’ve had this program rolling for three years now, and they just don’t stop coming in.”

The named seats make a great gift, and they also make interesting conversation pieces before a show.

“Every one of these seats is a story,” said Williams, “and that is what makes it special.”