

Let there be (more) light!



When you see “Puffs” this weekend on stage at the Sanford Performing Arts Center, pay special attention to the new lighting options! With the students, volunteer Jeff Perry wrote the cues using some of the new equipment.



Sanford Performing Arts Center gets boost to upgrade equipment

When the lights come up on Sanford High School’s fall play this weekend, the stars will shine! Audiences will be dazzled by the wit, the charm, the costumes and the props. What they may not consciously notice, but just as necessary to an amazing performance and audience experience, are the lights and sounds that support the dramatic talent on stage.

Via the Sanford Schools Legacy Foundation, the Gerard and Gertrude Genest Charitable Trust has donated \$25,000 to the Sanford Performing Arts Center to further develop the community stage they helped fund five years ago.

“We see how much the SPAC is doing for the community, and that was a motivating factor,” said the Trust’s Maura Herlihy. “They have good support from the community, but there are always capital needs and they need some bells and whistles.”

SPAC lighting volunteer Jeff Perry said the generous funding will further enhance the theater experience. “It’s amazing what you can do with lights,” said Perry, who has spent countless volunteer hours perfecting the lights for this show (and every show.) “Lighting is so much fun!”

New for this performance so far are six Elation 6-bar 1,000 lights; four on stage that will illuminate the actors from the floor, and two used in the back with black lights that will accentuate some stage details. They are also still shopping around for sound monitors and more accent



Lighting director Jeff Perry shows off one of the six new Elation 6-bar 1000 floor lights that give him new and better staging options.

lighting, some “eye candy” with a lot of new functions and features, said Perry.

“They are making a huge difference in the show. They light the cast members from below, and they also have LED lighting and infinite colors, so you can do more with the show,” said Jeff Perry. “There are details you won’t notice until the black lights come on, and then you see all the details in the set.”

Other new equipment on order will expand the theater’s capabilities. “New lighting gives us flexibility in how we use them,” for SPAC and any theater rentals.

Director Brett Williams says it will also save him time and rental costs. “So many shows these days require lights that we don’t have,” he said, and they haul the equipment back and forth to Portland to get the lights required. “We’re investing in our equipment so we don’t have to rent them every time, and it will allow us to bring even bigger and

better shows here.”

When they theater opened in 2020, they “value-engineered” the theater. “We built the infrastructure but scaled back the lighting package at the time, knowing we could add to it in the future.”

Williams said he is grateful for the family’s continued generosity.

“They are all about this community, they are all about Sanford,” said Williams. He said the Genest family had the chance to call the Sanford Performing Arts Center the Genest Family Performing Arts Center, “but are they focused on their community and chose to keep it named for our community.”

That same generosity has allowed SPAC to think outside the stage box. “We couldn’t risk tax-payer money on a show that could lose money, so the Genest donation has allowed us to take some risks on certain shows” and offer different styles of theater.

Their donation has also funded professional troupes for special school performances.

“There would be so many kids who would never be able to go to the theater if it weren’t for SPAC,” said Kendra Williams, president of the Legacy Foundation. “It was really important to (the Genest family) that people in Sanford get some exposure to the arts.”

Herlihy said her Meme and Pepe would approve of this theater. “They loved to go to the theater, and they loved musicals in particular,” she said. “My grandparents’ heart was in theater.”