

## Reflections From Shelley Brown Executive Producer, FREDDY® Awards

I will never forget the first FREDDY® Awards Show broadcast twenty years ago. For months our State Theatre staff and board had prepared for the show. It began with convincing a television station, 69 WFMZ-TV, to partner with us and begin with a LIVE broadcast. Remember, this was a brand-new concept...a live, three-hour show that would involve hundreds of students, local high-schools (who were almost all rather skeptical of a competition in theatre), and hundreds of volunteers (including our volunteer evaluators). To this day, I am amazed that Barry Fisher of WFMZ agreed to the live show. It was a huge risk and a brave decision. It made all the difference. So, there we were, holding our breath as the curtain rose on our first show. The community did not know what to expect and we had no idea how difficult it would all be. I think my heartbeat normalized a bit after the first hour, but I know that when we said good-night and "see you next year" it may have been the most relieved I have ever been. And so proud! Our State Theatre/WFMZ team was amazing, and the kids were fantastic. And the community loved it! I have worked in television and theatre in the Lehigh Valley for almost fifty years and I cannot recall a lovefest like that first year. A star was born that night in 2003.



As the years went on, the FREDDY® Awards became so much more than a high-school theatre competition. A community was created that impresses me more every year. "Freddy-world", as we call it, is a community full of friendship, love, and admiration. It is palpable in the theatre. The noise-level is epically loud and the support and admiration that the kids give each other is magical. Many of the kids have told me, often in late-night emails, that the FREDDY® experience was their favorite high school experience. Many happy stories are shared. Some are heartbreaking. But they always end with the sentiment that the friendships and support were special and long lasting. The best part about high school theatre is that there is a role for everyone. If you don't want to be on stage, you can be on the stage crew. You don't have to be beautiful or handsome, tall, or thin. There is a part for you if you seek it. Not a bad message for life.

As we approached year twenty, we began to dream about how we would handle such a milestone year. An extra-special new set? A full orchestra on stage? Flying or special effects? The sky was the limit. And then, the pandemic hit. For two years we were unable to present our FREDDY® show. We did our best to do something...a video retrospective of past shows and a "zoom" opening number in year one. Then we were saddened to have another year go by without being able to present the traditional show. We assembled an opening and closing number on our roof and a shorter show. We did the best we could under awful conditions, but it wasn't the same. We crossed our fingers for the following year.

Which brings us to this year...our 20th Anniversary! What about the special effects and crazy ideas? What would we do that was different...special...spectacular? Like George Bailey in "It's a Wonderful Life", it was right there in front of us. The kids are the spectacular element that was needed. The FREDDY® community twenty-years strong was just what we needed. The students that came to us representing all our schools were almost all brand new to the experience. None of them were born that first night, now decades ago when we began. The joy and wonder was right there where we left off, and thanks to the schools' directors, parents, sponsors, evaluators, and the kids, the magic returned. We're back!



## 2022 Scholarships, Internships and Community Awards

We Thank Our Community Partners For Enhancing  
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Air Products | Arts Community of Easton (ACE)  
Cedar Crest College | Civic Theatre of Allentown  
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lehighvalleylive.com + The Express-Times  
Mowad Turf Specialists | Muhlenberg College  
Pennsylvania Youth Ballet / Ballet Guild Of The Lehigh Valley  
R. Richard Knauss Foundation | West Virginia University

### Air Products Education/ Community Impact Award

Awarded to the school that best connects its musical production to other areas of academic study and/or a community project or event.

#### 2022 Recipient: Whitehall High School

The cast and crew of Whitehall High School's production of *Godspell: 2012 Revised Version*, learned the true meaning of what they were presenting on stage, bringing the message of love, community, and connection to life. The students built on the song "Beautiful City" and found ways that they could build their own city as well as the Ukraine.

All proceeds from concessions sales were donated to "Razom for Ukraine", a Ukrainian-American organization. When the parents found out that the sales from concessions were being donated to support Ukraine, they took it upon themselves to purchase the supplies out of their own pockets to fill the stand so that there was no expense to the school. A total of \$3,240 was raised.

The students coordinated with the Whitehall-Coplay Hunger Initiative, a local food bank in Whitehall, and organized a non-perishable food drive. During the song, "Beautiful City", they showed how to build a city of man, by placing the food donations on stage for all to see. Each night students distributed handmade ribbon pins to each person who donated, making the audience a sea of blue and yellow. At the end of the weekend, the students drove donations to the food bank for distribution to local families in need.

"We might just be kids, but we made a difference and didn't make the show all about us. It taught us to be humble. We could have used that snack stand money to buy things for our theatre program (we don't even have mic belts) but we have enough, and the Ukraine needs that money more than we do. Doing so made the show more than just a show, more than just actors saying something on stage...we lived the message right there."

~ Student, Whitehall High School

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The State Theatre is an approved Educational Improvement Organization through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program. Please consider directing EITC program credits to support the FREDDY® program!



## Mission and FREDDY® Facts

The mission of the FREDDY® Awards is to recognize and reward exceptional achievements in the production and performance of musical theatre programs in local high schools.

Modeled after Tony® Awards, the non-profit, EMMY® Award-winning program is open to all high schools in Northampton, Lehigh, and Warren counties.

- Since its inception in 2003, over 60,000 students from 33 high schools have participated. There is no cost to partake.
- Over 150 community volunteers, including many FREDDY® alumni, help with every aspect of the program.
- 24 volunteer evaluators attend all school shows. In total, these evaluators clocked 11,048 miles and evaluated 384 performances.
- Four students from every participating school take part in an educational two-week rehearsal intensive leading up to the ceremony.
- Students receive an outstanding educational experience with professional choreographers, musical directors and musicians who teach them new material and theatrical techniques in vocals, dance, and acting.
- Numerous food donors helped State Theatre supply over 1,400 free meals to participating students during rehearsals.
- Ticket sales to musical theatre performances at participating FREDDY® schools are up 60% since program's inception.
- Program costs exceeded \$440,000 in 2022.

Over \$2 million in college scholarships and paid internships have been awarded to participating FREDDY® students



"Life before the FREDDY®s for high school theatre was small. There was no community like there is now, and that is due to the FREDDY® Awards. It's great to go to the show and win and it's hard to go there and lose. But we've been on both sides of it and at the end of the day, performing for an audience of people who are there to see you succeed is the greatest feeling of all."

- Butch Diminico, Theatre Program Director,  
Bangor Area High School (The Express-Times)

## 2022 Participating Schools

Allentown Central Catholic - Disney's The Little Mermaid  
Bangor Area - Les Misérables (School Edition)  
Belvidere - Godspell  
Bethlehem Catholic - Hello, Dolly!  
Catasauqua - Chicago (School Edition)  
Dieruff - Godspell (2012 Revised Version)  
Easton Area - 42nd St.  
Emmaus - The Addams Family (School Edition)  
Freedom - Curtains  
Hackettstown - Sister Act  
Liberty - The Sound of Music  
Moravian Academy - HMS Pinafore  
Nazareth Area - Little Shop of Horrors  
North Warren Regional - The Addams Family (School Edition)  
Northampton Area - Mamma Mia!  
Northern Lehigh - 25th Annual Putnam County  
Spelling Bee  
Northwestern Lehigh - Bye Bye Birdie  
Notre Dame - Disney's Beauty and the Beast  
Parkland - Mamma Mia!  
Phillipsburg - Guys & Dolls  
Salisbury - RENT (School Edition)  
Saucon Valley - DreamWorks' Shrek: The Musical  
Southern Lehigh - Bye Bye Birdie  
Warren County Technical School - What Is Love:  
A Musical Revue  
Warren Hills Regional - Mamma Mia!  
Whitehall - Godspell (2012 Revised Version)  
William Allen - Grease  
Wilson Area - The Addams Family:  
A New Musical Comedy

State Theatre

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## 2022 Community Impact Report

