

From the desk of:

*Robin Abrams Felton
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Dear NAU Alumni and Friends,

I'm writing to let you know about a very exciting opportunity that has just been created to enhance the NAU Theatre Department! I hope you will be as excited as I am. Let me explain.

I had the opportunity to visit NAU twice this year. In November I brought my family for a trip through my memories of NAU and the Theatre Department. My favorite part of the visit was spending time with John Sangster, senior theatre major, who was assigned as our guide. It was a pleasure to see how happy he is to be at NAU! His stories were filled with so much potential of things yet to come.

My second visit was sadly only one month later for a service celebrating the life of our beloved Dr. Cliff White, who died on December 26. The night before the service I had dinner with Kathleen McGeever, Chair of NAU Theatre. We were talking about the theatre department and the unfortunate reality of the economic situation and its impact on NAU theatre. I thought of the students I had just met in November and what their experience at NAU would be like in light of budget cuts. I pondered how I could help enhance their educational experience, while honoring the memory of Dr. White and all the faculty and mentors from the past to the present?

My husband Jim and I have a deep belief in the power of higher education, and I have long been searching for a meaningful way to thank NAU for my time there—a way that would directly benefit students. Over dinner with Kathleen the idea of the “**Golden Stagehands**” fund was born and I wrote my first check to get the fund started.

The idea behind the **Golden Stagehands** is to have a pool of money available that the theatre department can use to add “sparkles” to at least one production a year in the Clifford E. White Theatre. This annual production would be sponsored by the NAU alumni, friends and parents who are “members” of the **Golden Stagehands**, and we could be there on opening night to cheer them on!

As we envision it, the fund will not be used to paint hallways or buy text books. Rather, it will be used to upgrade a script that requires costly royalties; or, to buy additional materials to build a “period piece” set; or, to offset costs associated with constructing costumes for a production “from the underwear out.”

It could also be used to bring in a guest lighting artist, guest designer, guest choreographer, or a guest director. In other words, to give students a unique learning opportunity, beyond what they would have in a typical production. A faculty committee will be designated to approve the uses from this fund and will report annually to the members of the **Golden Stagehands**.

My husband and I would like to challenge theatre alumni, friends and parents to join this initiative. **We will match dollar for dollar all donations to the Golden Stagehands Fund up to \$5,000 this year, allowing your donation, small or large, to go twice as far!**

We have asked for our initial donation to be put to use immediately to enhance the costume budget for the upcoming Spring 09 production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* (February 27, 28 and March 1, 4, 5,6,7). The **Golden Stagehands** Fund will be officially announced during this run and you are invited to attend as a founding member!

After "Earnest" subsequent donations will go towards the theatre department's planning for 09/10. Our hope is that members will give annually so that the department can count on one production a year with extra "sparkles." Some specific ideas for uses of the **Golden Stagehands** fund include:

- Enhanced scenery that may include a turntable or a significant build for a multi-dimensional setting
- Special effects make-up, scenery, or sound for a production that might have these needs (i.e.; *Frankenstein*, *Mask*, *The Hobbit*, etc.)
- Projected scenery – the fund would enable students to use current, industry technology for a production utilizing projections, potentially holograms and other advanced technology that is currently being applied to the medium of theatre
- To aid in the production of a mammoth project like *William's American Clock* where there is a cast of 50 plus with multiple costumes and the settings move from one time period to another; in other words, a sweeping epic.

As this fund grows, I see the opportunity for a **Golden Stagehands** weekend when members are welcomed to campus to meet each other, to celebrate the production, and to share some of our wisdom and experience with theatre students. The possibilities are endless and your ideas will be added to an already growing list of ideas on how to celebrate the impact that the **Golden Stagehands** will have on NAU Theatre.

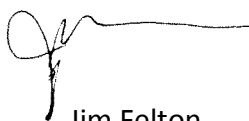
Many of us are truly saddened by the loss of Dr. White to his family, friends and the entire theatre community. We hope that the **Golden Stagehands** fund will provide a special opportunity to honor his legacy and the legacy of all of our wonderful teachers, professors and mentors.

Won't you join me and Jim as founding members of the **Golden Stagehands**?

Sincerely,



Robin Abrams Felton



Jim Felton