

The Show Must Go On! Donation Safeguards Arts Programming at the Youth Bureau



A donation made in memory of Ruth Davis, the founder of what was formally known as The Center for Expressive Arts at the Ithaca Youth Bureau (IYB), will help increase opportunities for youth to explore expressive arts locally.

Sandy LaFeber, a friend and colleague of Ruth Davis, made the donation to ensure that Tompkins County children benefit from expressive arts opportunities just like they did when she and Davis worked together at the Youth Bureau in the 1970s and 1980s.

LaFeber's donation – named the Ruth Davis Expressive Arts Program – will support reduced fees for theatre programs; provide supplies, tools and equipment for students to explore costume and prop making; purchase a sound system with microphones; and sponsor performing arts shows for children and families in the community.

“For more than 40 years, Ruth was my friend, mentor and colleague,” LaFeber said. “Her life’s work was devoted to making all aspects of the performing arts—improvisation, prop and costume building, voice training, movement, and acting—accessible and inclusive for children of all ages.”

“Ruth’s approach to teaching emphasized process over performance, so that kids developed the various skills needed to build a production from the ground up,” she said. “Ruth taught her students that there was so much more to learn and experience about theater beyond playing a role on the stage. I hope that by helping to support a diverse offering of expressive arts programming at the Ithaca Youth Bureau, I can help honor Ruth’s legacy and continue her vision of providing all children the encouragement and direction needed to realize their artistic and creative potential.”

Youth Bureau Director Liz Klohmann said the IYB is excited to receive this generous donation. “It comes at a time when we have just hired a new Recreation Specialist focused on expressive arts for youth,” she said. “We will be offering a variety of diverse and inclusive programs and hope everyone will give them a try.”

Klohmann remembers Ruth Davis and her passion for youth theatre and arts.

“I met Ruth when I worked at the Youth Bureau as a volunteer and student in the early 1980s,” Klohmann said. “She loved teaching children and getting them involved in the theatre experience. After she retired, she often checked in on us with a visit or to attend a Youtheatre production. We are excited to carry her vision of Youtheatre and Expressive Arts forward at the Youth Bureau.”

Davis was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut in 1919. She graduated from Smith Teachers College certified to teach nursery school through third grade. When she moved to Ithaca, she was asked

to coordinate and teach the Cornell Veterans Nursery School. Later, she formed the Youtheatre and Center for Expressive Arts, as well as, the Tin Can Fantasy Factory, the Children's Film Series at Cornell University, the Ithaca College Concert Series, and Puppet Guild, all for children. In 1993, she was presented a prestigious Special Recognition Award by the American Alliance for Theatre and Education in Washington. DC and another Distinguished Service award by the Association of New York State Youth Bureau.

LaFeber began working in children's theater as a voice coach soon after moving to Ithaca in 1959. She worked with Davis at the Youth Bureau's Expressive Arts center for more than 10 years and as an instructor for Youtheatre developed and led by Davis. LaFeber spent many years working in outreach for the Ithaca Opera Company and the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra. She also served on the board of the Ithaca Arts Council.

Additional donations to Ruth Davis Expressive Arts Programs may be made through the nonprofit Friends of the Ithaca Youth Bureau (FIYB) at Friendsiyb.org/donate

For more information about Expressive Arts Programming at the Youth Bureau go to:
https://register.communitypass.net/reg/cat_program_list.cfm?season_id=26440

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