

25 Years of Shining the “SPOTLITE”

On Bartlesville Students

Every year since 1992 Nick Sweet has come to Bartlesville with the goal of getting every 4th grader in town in the “SPOTLITE”. SPOTLITE stands for “Special Program On Theatre-Lessons In Theatre Education”. The week-long program focuses on the natural connection between language arts and theatre arts. Vocabulary is emphasized – written, spoken and emotional. The fourth graders receive introductory lessons in improvisation, character development and poetry. The program culminates with a tour of the Bartlesville Community Center with workshops in stagecraft, lighting and makeup followed by a performance of the Missoula Children’s Theatre.

Although Sweet has spent the last 25 years coming to Bartlesville once a year for SPOTLITE, his connection to the city and its arts community goes back all the way to 1982 when he served as drama instructor for the Westside Community Center’s Summer Fine Arts Fest. He worked with Morris McCorvey over the next five summers to produce WCC’s recital shows at the Bartlesville Community Center. He has since directed 17 shows at BCC including four for Children’s Musical Theatre--- “Cinderella,” (CMT’s first production) “The Sound of Music,” “Oliver!,” and “Willy Wonka.” He also wrote and directed “Pride Of The Prairie” and “City of Legends,” Bartlesville’s City and Statehood Centennial plays. As an adjunct faculty member at Oklahoma Wesleyan University from 2002-2008, Sweet taught Communications, Literature, Humanities and English and received a Teaching Excellence Award. He also directed the school’s first five musicals including “Meet Me in St. Louis” and “You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown.” This is his 40th year as a free-lance stage director.

Sweet’s relationship with Children’s Musical Theater made it easier for the organization to take over SPOTLITE when the program’s founding organization, the Allied Arts and Humanities Council disbanded in 2014. CMT’s participation makes it likely the program will survive for another 25 years.

As he enters his 25th year, Sweet is looking forward to his opening remarks to this year’s 4th graders. He’ll start with, “If your parents were in 4th Grade in any of Bartlesville’s schools, and are under the age of 35, I taught them in SPOTLITE.” The Beat Goes On.