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Theatre Education Association

Perform. Transform.

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Hi everyone- I am Colleen Law-Tefft, current NYSTEA Student Conference registrar and Treasurer on the board. My background and journey to NYSTEA is probably a little different than most of yours. First, I am not a teacher. I grew up doing theater and credit my dad (Del Law) for introducing it to me when I was in fifth grade. I was bitten by the bug after that.

I was excited to join drama club when I got into high school. I was fortunate in our small rural school that the director (Rick Thormahlen) offered some basic theater and acting classes which further encouraged my excitement for theater. After college I became very active with a local community theater group where I met a director (Robin Blakeman) who changed my life. He is a Julliard graduate and one of the most creative people I have ever known. We became fast friends and had a unique actor/director connection. Under his tutelage, I grew as an actor and learned about all aspects of theater. He opened my eyes to the theater world with all its possibilities and experiences. He taught me what being a director was really about and gave me the tools and courage to try directing on my own. I began directing a few local high school productions and then the position at Sherburne Earlville opened up and I jumped at it.

Being in a small, rural school, the opportunities and funds were limited, and my goal was always to bring as much experience and appreciation of theater to them as possible. A local colleague, Susan Schoonmaker suggested I take my students to the NYSTEA student conference. I had never heard of NYSTEA or the conference, but it sounded interesting. 2000 or 2001 (I honestly can't remember) was my first conference. I brought two of my students to check it out and we were impressed by the organization of the conference, the quality of the workshops and the friendliness of the people. Since then, I have brought students each year to the conference, and it became one of the best things I could ever have done for them. I believe it enhanced their knowledge of theater immensely.

In 2010 my friend, colleague, stage manager, partner in crime, Ann Campbell and I were asked to join the Student Conference Committee and train to become the registrar under Kathleen Wens. This began a new chapter and appreciation for NYSTEA and the student conference committee. We were the "new team" charged with continuing the tried-and-true traditions but also to continually improve, change and streamline the processes and the conference itself. And we still strive for that today. I feel incredibly lucky to be part of this team, led expertly by Tony and Adam. And 12 years later, I still look forward to our meetings and all the work we do to create the student conference every year. A couple of years ago Adam convinced me to join the NYSTEA Board and then last year I became the Treasurer for NYSTEA. I am honored to serve this organization who has given so much to me and to "my kids" over the years, including my own daughter who attended a few years ago.

This fall I was honored to receive the Rod Marriott Award from NYSTEA. I can only reflect on and look back to see how far I've come from the community theater person with little directing experience who applied for an extra-curricular position in a small school that had no drama program and almost no support. I just knew that I wanted to bring theater to students and hopefully build a program. This year, after 24 years, I "retired" from directing the drama club at Sherburne Earlville and I think I accomplished that. I am proud to now stand among the former recipients of the Rod Marriott Award, and the many, many teachers and educators I have met throughout my time with NYSTEA, in awe of them and still pinching myself.

-Blessings- Colleen Law-Tefft

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