What an amazing 50th celebration we had for the Kids From Wisconsin. I hope you had a chance to see the “high-energy, can’t-miss show of the summer” that was truly worthy of being the 50th Anniversary edition. We also had a powerful alumni weekend celebration that culminated in an amazing assembly of alumni on the Wisconsin State Fair stage joining the 50th troupe during the closing number!

The reason Kids must go on isn’t just because 35 talented youth get amazing performance training each year. It’s also because 1,000 even younger dreamers get to participate in the Kids outreach workshops each year. And, it’s because 30 Wisconsin towns feel the positive impact when the Kids show up in their cities. Over 120,000 people see a show who might not otherwise have access to such high-quality, affordable and professional entertainment. And local community service organizations raise tens of thousands of dollars in needed funds for their local projects.

SHOWMANSHIP

Thirty-five of the state’s most potential-filled young performers get one-of-a-kind performance and training experience unmatched by any other youth performing group.

LEADERSHIP

One thousand young dreamers, many underserved, get a taste of the limelight when the Kids teach kids and inspire them to pursue their own amazing dreams.

PARTNERSHIP

One hundred twenty thousand people in more than thirty Wisconsin towns get to experience a high-quality, affordable show while raising needed funds for their community projects.
This past summer was such an incredible time for the Kids From Wisconsin.

It’s difficult for any organization to make it to a 50th anniversary, but to do it while thriving the way Kids has was extra special.

The 50th show, “Shine The Light,” top to bottom, was an amazing show. From the premier to the final show, the troupe soared through the summer. Audience members left, thrilled by the experience, and could not believe the talent and professional showmanship that this group possessed. From the spectacular dance and vocals to our tremendously popular 14-piece “featured” band, the youth of Wisconsin took the stage with passion and brilliance.

A look through the decades of music since the conception of Kids From Wisconsin started off with music straight out of 1969. The show ended with the song “A Million Dreams” from 2018.

One of the audience highlights was the end of the first act, where we took a fresh look at one of the most popular songs in the history of Kids, “Bill Bailey, Won’t You Please Come Home.” The number featured each musical element of the troupe, starting with a single piano on stage. It then continued with a second pianist, a Dixieland band, a vocal jazz quartet, stomp sticks, tappers, a swing dance, and a rousing finish.

Yes, the 50th Anniversary was a huge success, but “the beat goes on” as we move into the next 50 years.
50th Logo and Marketing

The bus traveled over 6,000 miles this summer and acted as a traveling billboard with a special Kids 50th logo. The logo was designed with a font similar to the 1969 logo with a heavy retro feel.

1969 Opens the Curtain

The costume in the opening number was a reproduction from the 1969 show, which at that time was considered two costumes: jacket on or jacket off. The retro look included the original straw hat and dance stick, which was worked into the choreography highlighting the significant year.

Historical Media Archive

A five-year project, including thousands of original photos, news articles, and video clips, has been a work-in-progress. A timeline of 50 years’ worth of media was uploaded and tagged into a searchable media archive. It is publicly accessible on the Kids From Wisconsin website under history.

Milwaukee PBS/ARTS Page

Milwaukee Public Television produced a special program covering the 50th Anniversary of the Kids From Wisconsin. The 10-minute overview includes the What, When, Why, and How the Kids continue to carry on the 50-year tradition.

Alumni and Families Gather to Celebrate

Over 200 alumni and their families joined in to celebrate the weekend of August 3-5. A weekend highlight was having each decade of alumni walk to the stage for the closing number of the Kids performance, “A Million Dreams of Light.” Alumni also participated by singing the National Anthem at the Brewers game on Sunday, August 5.

2018 Alumni Challenge

Many of our alumni and their families helped to underwrite the entire copyright costs for this year’s performance. Never before have we seen such support from our alumni. We hope to see it continue, even after the 50th.

Foreigner at the Fair

The troupe was invited to sing with Foreigner on August 7 as Foreigner performed on the Grandstand stage. This was very reminiscent of the the early years of Kids when they performed before and after many big-name artists across the country.
Empowering Community Connections

Workshops continued to empower creative and emotional growth of young people across the state. These collaborative, hands-on performing arts workshops focused on building performance skills and making the arts enjoyable for our next generation. Whether the experience was a first introduction or a reinforcement, it played an important role in personal and artistic growth of young people in 20 communities.

Because of a large number of responses to last year’s workshop survey, a band clinic was added in four communities to test its draw of instrumental participants. Middle and high school instrumentalists were invited to learn a portion of the show with the Kids band. The clinics were very successful in reaching participants and will be part of the outreach program going forward.

In some communities, workshops created family interest by offering participants a free ticket to the evening performance. This proved effective in encouraging younger families to attend the performance.

The workshops are allowing the Kids to build their next generation of audiences. Kids members “pay it forward” by teaching performance skills and tools that can be carried into daily life.

88.4% of workshop participants attended the performance with families.

Outreach took on even more meaning through “Healing Hearts through Song and Dance” sessions. The Milwaukee Children’s Hospital, the Ronald McDonald House, and a performance at San Camillo Senior Community were part of this new outreach that brought joy to those unable to attend a performance.

For the past three years, our outreach and leadership training sessions have proven to be the backbone of how we continue to meet goals and expectations. We focus on how to mentor inclusively, instruct in a style that is positive and engaging, interact with participants in a welcoming and encouraging way, and promote free and creative thinking.

When kids learn from Kids, they’re able to dream a little bigger, shine a little brighter and believe in themselves more than ever before.
This year brought an incredible opportunity to tell the Kids’ story to organizations, community leaders, and educators and to brainstorm with development directors, community engagement directors, and foundations.

A sponsorship change by the Wisconsin State Fair redirected our focus on acquiring a much-needed facility for rehearsals and housing that would fit the many requirements of the Kids organization. This offered the organization an opportunity to tell its story to other interested partners. Wisconsin Lutheran College was one that saw tremendous opportunity to collaborate starting in 2019!

“We are delighted and honored to partner with Wisconsin Lutheran College in a shared mission. WLC will provide the world-class facilities to help us prepare and present our performing season,” said Tina Weiss, Executive Director of Kids From Wisconsin. The change of sponsorship has not affected the opportunity to perform at the Wisconsin State Fair as we have for the past 50 years.

Partnering with many community organizations across the state is important in each one of the communities we perform in, not only to bring quality performing arts to their communities, but also to offer a way to help these organizations earn needed dollars for projects through hosting shows.

See what some of our community hosts have done with the proceeds from hosting.

- Tomah High School Chorus
- Big Foot High School Band Program
- Arts Council of South Wood County
- Wauwatosa Rotary
- Monona Grove Show Choir
- Plover Kiwanis Club
- New London Lions Club
- Wolf River Harmony - Shawano
- Manitowoc Noon Rotary
- Antigo Rotary Club

- Show Choir costumes
- Jazz band students trip to New Orleans
- General maintenance & items not in the budget
- Haiti Dental Clinic and Guatemala Literacy Project
- Offset show choir, “Silver Connection,” expenses
- Boys and Girls Club scholarships for students
- Allocate funds towards a new walking and biking trail
- Scholarships to seniors pursuing a music career
- Projects in Manitowoc community
- Funding for foreign exchange program
2018 ALUMNI CHALLENGE
All of the 2018 copyright fees were underwritten by the following alumni family.

Once a Kid, Always a Kid
A tremendous thank you to the alumni and alumni families who supported the “2018 Alumni Challenge.” We would love to see this much excitement every year from our alumni. Each year it is important that we receive support for the organization you hold so dear.

Watch for the next “Alumni Challenge” being presented by Producer, Taras Nahniak, in late November. It will be posted on the Alumni Facebook page and sent to your email. Please make sure your contact information is updated regularly. Contact the Kids office if your contact information has changed.

2018 Alumni Challenge Supporters

LENT THE LIGHT SHINE
Emma Borkowski ('16-'17)
Meg Borkowski ('13)
Taras Nahniak, Staff ('90-'18)

70's DISCO FEVER
Cheryl Baxter-Ratiff ('75-'77)
Randy and Kim Berres (Ben) ('01- '03)
Julie Johnson (Justin) ('01- '03)
Jodi ('96-'98) & Matt Mealey ('92-'95)
Kurt Schroeder ('69) and Diane

EARTH WIND & FIRE
Brent Bahnub ('84)
Michael Burish ('14-'17)
Paula Karaway Gavin ('89-'81)
Tim Karth ('89-'93)
Sarah Miller-Luhrs ('03-'04)
Ryan Luhrs ('02-'03)
The Phalen Family ('84,'17,'18)
Sam & Karen Slaman (Steve, Stan, Stew)
Jack Zondio ('69-'17)

TOTAOLY RAD 80's SYNTH POP
The Gatz Family ('18)
Melissa Koening Chakar ('87-'88)
Brenda Larsen Grove ('85-'87)
Amy & Mark Guenthner (Eric, Kevin)
Daniel Meloy ('88-'89)
Peggy Morgan Strimple ('67)
Brid Nicolaieson ('87-'88)
Angela Sartori ('86-'87)
Ted C. Williams ('96-'97)

HERBIE HANCOCK'S "ROCKIT"
Feist Construction (Nick) ('14-'15)
Alex Turcik ('16-'18)

CAN'T TOUCH THE 90's
Brad Anderson ('91-'96)

TURN OF THE CENTURY
Barry Baksunowicz ('12-'13)
Chad Baudhuin ('93-'93)
Terri & Barry Ellis (Sarah) ('06-'08)
Josh Gibbs ('06-'08)
Kenn & Pam Kesner (Max) ('01-'04)
Kennedy Konstizke ('17-'18)
Kim Nickol Maehler ('71-'72)
Jim Molinaro ('83-'85)
Tracy Phelps Bonin ('91)
Jennifer Recarey- in memory of Nick Azzolina
Brandon Richards ('99-'00)
Austin Riche ('15-'16)
Nancy Ruckert Tucker ('70-'73)
The Shields Family (Megan) ('17-'18)

THE INCREDIBLES/MACARTHUR PARK
Kerry Griebenow ('73-'74)

BROADWAY THROUGH THE DECADES
Taylor Brockman ('12)
Brennon Brown ('17)
Susan Caldwell-Krug ('76-'77)
Lexie Chaissson ('14-'17)
Malory Puhnmann ('17-'18)
Alex Hatcher Family ('14-'16)
Ryan & Sheila Parker (Miranda) ('18)
Isaac Risseeuw ('09-'10)
The Smith (Isabelle) ('15)
Joyce Olsen Stoppelbein ('71-'72)
Michaels Utica ('87)

DOUBLE TALK WALK from CITY OF ANGELS
Paul Karnikawa ('94)
Andrea Pelquon ('92-'94)

A MILLION DREAMS OF LIGHT
Shirley Azzolina ('69-'70), Kathy and PJ Azzolina
(in memory of Mark & Betty)
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Your gifts prepare young performers to become leaders and showmen.

**Income**

Fifty-two percent of the Kids From Wisconsin’s annual income comes from individuals, foundations and contributing corporations. Without the generous contributions from people just like you, Kids would not be what it is today.

An “Alumni Challenge” was inspired by Taras Nahimniak and gave alumni the opportunity to be part of the 50th year’s success. This challenge brought alumni contributions above any other year. Bookings were once again full. 2019 booking is already complete.

New funding from CAMPAC (Milwaukee County Arts Fund), helped to bring a free, open-to-the-public performance and workshop to Humboldt Park in Milwaukee County.

- Most new donors were alumni
- A couple individual donors significantly contributed to the Endowment in 2018 in place of their regular donation
- The number of donors were 12% over 2017

**Expense**

Expenses were controlled, even with the larger purchases of this season which included:

- Copyright costs increased over 400% since 2013 and are approximately 20% of production costs.
- New risers replaced the old and worn, wooden podiums.
- Lighting equipment added to the artistic quality of the performance.
- Mics were refurbished for new FCC regulations.
- A bus wrap helped to celebrate 50 years. The wrap was a rolling billboard across 6,000 miles of highway.
- Increased per-diem assisted troupe members in the ability to take part in the Kids opportunity all summer.
- Special costumes to help “Shine the Light” on 50 years.

IN MEMORIAL: Charlie Krause, former Vice President, passed away this last June. His guidance in establishing the Kids From Wisconsin’s Endowment Fund will serve the organization well for years to come. The fund is currently $271,000 and growing with the incredible contributions from those who chose to invest in the next 50 years of Kids. Let us know if you have interest in contributing to the fund that will invest in our Kids!
Going from former singer/dancer to taking on a new administrative role with Kids From Wisconsin has been nothing short of thrilling. For the 2018 season, I had the privilege of creating logos for the 50th Anniversary, as well as the tour bus wrap. As 2019 nears, I couldn’t be more excited to share a new logo, tagline and revamped website with you.

Like all things timeless and classic, the Kids From Wisconsin logo and overall look didn’t need to be built from the ground up. You wouldn’t completely change the look of a Ford Mustang or the taste of apple pie, would you? The tools I needed to create the new Kids logo were right in front of me, with almost every element already existing in past logos. The retro font of “Kids” was found in the 1960’s logo, and the vibrant red, purple and blue color scheme was taken directly from our most recent logo, which was created in 1994. Repurposing elements, instead of reinventing an idea, makes for a logo that is streamlined and versatile, yet recognizable by audiences everywhere.

Creating a tagline that encompasses the mission of Kids From Wisconsin was no easy feat, but hours of brainstorming boiled down to three words: Showmanship. Leadership. Partnership. When it comes to communicating what Kids is all about, I hope you find these three words to be as fitting as I do.

With all these new components in place, I invite you to peruse our new website, follow the latest Kids happenings and maybe even treat yourself to something from our store. 2018 was a year of celebration, and I can’t wait to see what 2019 and the next 50 years have in store for Kids From Wisconsin.