



National Estate Planning Awareness Week is observed each year during the third full week of October and offers a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the values and causes that matter most to you and hopefully inspires you to create or update your estate plan. Through thoughtful estate planning, you can care for your loved ones while also creating a lasting impact on future generations through the mission you believe in.

This year, we're especially grateful to the members of our Center Stage Legacy Society who recently gathered at our inaugural brunch to celebrate the enduring difference that planned gifts make.

The **Center Stage Legacy Society** celebrates patrons who include The Phoenix Theatre Company in their estate plans. Our members have experienced first-hand the power live theatre has to inspire and heal in their own lives, and their future gifts help secure the future of live theatre in Arizona, ensuring that audiences for generations to come will experience the joy, connection, and transformation that only the performing arts can provide.



Craig and Ellen Dean, and Lisa Kroese

Craig and Ellen Dean's love for the arts is only rivaled by their generosity towards the artists and community we serve, so joining the Center Stage Legacy Society became a way to combine their passions and ensure accessibility to the arts long-term.

"My parents, who came from New York, loved theater and attended The Phoenix Theatre Company in the 1950's, back when it was "Phoenix Little Theater". There were always records of musical theater soundtracks playing in the house when I grew up. Craig came to theater as an adult and loves the theater experience at home and while traveling. Both Craig and I want to ensure the viability of live theater for future generations— especially now that so much of their lives are online. There is nothing like sharing the emotion of live theater with others in the intimacy of a theater.

In addition, supporting the theatre's educational programs and Partners that Heal is important to us as well.

Whatever we can do for our precious artists and performers, we are happy to do, especially now that our granddaughter is starting her career as an actor in London and we realize how difficult, consuming, and wonderful this career path is.

Basically, we LOVE The Phoenix Theatre Company, and we want others to love it too."

Lisa Kroese has been a performer and patron of the arts her whole life, and after recently moving to Phoenix, joined the Center Stage Legacy Society to continue supporting a community she loves so dearly.

"I have put The Phoenix Theatre Company in my estate plan because I feel it is the premier theater in town. It is incredible to me what is offered. Everyone should be able to experience coming to the glorious property and being fed emotionally and artistically.

I have been a dancer my entire life and in my adult life I have sung in choirs. In my spare time I always attend the theater, spending a lot of time in New York doing so. So, attending theater combines all of my passions! Personally, I have volunteered in arts organizations. I was on the board of Pacific Northwest Ballet, President of the board of directors of Spectrum Dance Theater, and on the Tisch School of the Arts board in New York. In Seattle I was very involved with 5th Ave Theatre and Village Theatre. My daughter attended Tisch School of the Arts in NY and received a BA in dance. She has also danced her entire life. I understand the sacrifice and commitment it takes to raise an artist.

Planned gifts are important to a theater's future, so they can plan accordingly for their growth.

I hope my legacy gift will enable future generations to attend The Phoenix Theatre Company. When I sit down in the audience of a play or musical, I always say to myself, "take me on a journey". I might have needed to cry or laugh, be entertained, surprised, or who knows what that day. It is a time to disappear and be delighted, motivated or just come up for air in life. Theater is my greatest joy.

If you love it and believe in it, give money to make sure it does not go away!"

These generous gifts will make a lasting impact not only on our community but also for people like D. Scott Withers, an Arizona based artist and performer, and friend of The Phoenix Theatre Company since 1988.

"In today's world, as screens seem to continue taking over our lives and AI feels like it threatens to replace our abilities to think for ourselves, it becomes more and more important that theatres like The Phoenix Theatre Company exist.

Theatre provides a profoundly human experience - one that I believe must be preserved, protected and deeply valued.

When you make a legacy gift to The Phoenix Theatre Company, you are ensuring the future of this art form and the impact it will have on generations to come. You are changing the future of someone like me, who walked into those theatre doors in 1988 to perform in my first production here. I learned so much then and continue to learn now. I have become a stronger artist and a better human through my work here, and I know there are literally thousands of artists and artisans who can say the same thing.

I know there are people whose lives are changed when they experience the work we do here.

All of it is accomplished in no small part by the support of people who are legacy donors and who cherish that connection, that community, that uniquely human encounter that is like no other. Their generosity is truly our gain. I cannot possibly thank them enough."

We hope these stories inspire you to consider your own legacy. Whether you are creating your first estate plan or reviewing an existing one, it is an act of care that can offer peace of mind and create a lasting impact for the future of the arts.

To learn more about including The Phoenix Theatre Company in your estate plans, please contact Julia Haase at j.haase@phoenixtheatre.com.

Is estate planning right for you? Learn more here: [Estate planning: do you need one?](#) | [Fidelity](#)

A gift in your will or estate plan costs nothing today yet helps ensure our mission continues for generations. If you've already included us in your plans, we'd love to know so we can thank you and welcome you into our Center Stage Legacy Society.