Not everyone in Bloomington can make the trip to New York to see a Broadway show, but at the Indiana University Auditorium, Broadway can come to them — five times a year.

For more than 75 years, the Indiana University Auditorium has brought its stage high-quality, varied programming accessible to people throughout the region. Today, it plays a pivotal role in not only entertaining attendees, but in forging connections among theatre-goers and educating future arts lovers along the way.

"Once we opened, we began hosting world-class performances and artists from around the country and world, and we still do that today," said Maria Talbert, managing director of the Indiana University Auditorium. "We value our tradition of being able to bring to the community — not just the university community, not just the Bloomington community, but the southern Indiana community —
The Chamber represents business interests to local, state and federal representatives, serving as an advocate on behalf of all businesses for the issues critical to the future of our community. If you need assistance with a business advocacy issue, please contact your Advocacy Team at The Chamber.

Chamber Hosts Local Leaders Forum

Last month, The Chamber hosted the annual Local Leaders Forum at Fountain Square Ballroom. The event featured Mayor Hamilton, Commissioner Amanda Barge, Monroe County Council President Ryan Cobine and Bloomington City Council President Susan Sandberg. Each elected official discussed what their units have been working on the past year and what to look for in the coming year. The audience asked a variety of questions focused on affordable housing, the opioid crisis, and downtown development.

1 Percent Food and Beverage Tax Passes Monroe County Council

On Dec. 13, the Monroe County Council passed a 1 percent tax on prepared food and beverages sold in the county to help fund the expansion of the Monroe Convention Center. Merchants are required to collect the 1 percent tax one month after the tax is enacted. The collections will be submitted to the Indiana Treasurer of State and then paid back to the county by the state. The Chamber spoke in favor of the tax to help expand the convention center.

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City Council Approves Changes to Title 20

The Bloomington City Council approved an amendment to the UDO that reduced the height and density permitted in the downtown overlays. The amendment passed 9-0. The Chamber opposed the amendment and also took issue with the city administration trying to quickly and quietly pass significant changes to the UDO. The city argued the changes are temporary until the UDO is updated in the next year. The amendment was amended during the plan commission meeting to sunset after one year.

City Seeks Board and Commission Applicants

The city of Bloomington is currently accepting applications to fill vacancies on boards and commissions. Information for each board and commission can be found on the city’s website at bloomington.in.gov/boards. The Office of the Mayor and Office of the City Clerk urge potential applicants to attend a meeting for the specific board or commission prior to applying. The city currently has 45 boards and commissions.

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Contact Anne Bono
812-336-6381
abono@Chamber Bloomington.org
New Year, New Face, Familiar Mission

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a wonderful and safe holiday and your 2018 is off to a great start. This issue of BizNet celebrates weddings in our community, and despite our recent cold weather, brides-to-be are excitedly planning for their big day.

The Chamber is excited to introduce our new president and CEO, Phil D’Amico. He will officially begin his duties on Feb. 1. The board of directors and staff are excited for the community to meet Phil and get to know him better in the coming months. Our press release is on page F6 — we’ll have more on Phil next month for you!

The year ended with the Chamber lending its voice to two very important advocacy issues. The first was the food and beverage tax. The Chamber supported the 1 percent tax on prepared food and beverages sold in the entire county at the Monroe County Council meeting last month. Some 27 communities in the state have taken advantage of this tool to help enhance quality of place and I am happy Monroe County is now part of that list. The convention center expansion will create new jobs, strengthen and grow our local economy, and increase the vibrancy of downtown. There is still much work to be done on the expansion and The Chamber remains committed to vetting any final proposed project, financial projections and project partners to ensure that the tax is used in a fiscally responsible and impactful way.

The second advocacy issue was proposed changes to Title 20 of the Unified Development Ordinance. The city proposed decreasing the maximum by-right height and density permitted in the downtown overlays. The Chamber opposed the amendment and criticized the city for the lack of transparency, and what appeared to be a deliberate effort to pass a significant change to the UDO without opportunity for debate and discussion. The Chamber discovered this through a legal notice in The Herald-Times. The Chamber Advocacy Council quickly convened a group that included other stakeholders and the city administration to discuss the impact this would have on downtown development. The amendment eventually passed the Bloomington City Council 9-0. Significant legislation like this requires adequate time for community input and discussions. Although this is not the outcome we wanted, The Chamber will continue to advocate for transparency and integrity of the process.

As we start a new year and welcome a new leader, I want to take a moment to thank each of you for your continued support of The Chamber during this time of transition. I took on the interim president and CEO role in July when Jeb Conrad resigned, and it’s been the most rewarding and experience of my professional career. I am so grateful to our board of directors, ambassadors, and volunteers for their support and guidance. I also want to thank all the people who participate in the search committee for their help ensuring we found the best possible leader for our organization. Lastly, I want to thank The Chamber staff. This team has gone above and beyond the past several months and it has been an honor to work with them. Our goal during the transition was not just to maintain, but to move this organization forward and I’m happy to say we have done just that.

Cheers to a happy, healthy and prosperous 2018!
Young Professionals Make a Difference

By Jim Inman, director of marketing and communications

Happy New Year! Joining The Chamber’s hYe — helping Young Professionals excel — program is a great New Year’s resolution to make. hYe meets monthly at a different location, and is open to anyone ages 21-40 (and we welcome those “young at heart” to participate, too). hYe allows local young professionals to meet, network and learn about Bloomington and all the unique parts of our community. The hYe steering committee works to make hYe events fun, interactive and beneficial to everyone who attends.

2017 wrapped up with a holiday party at The Root Cellar of FARMBloomington. Attendees were encouraged to wear an Ugly Christmas Sweater, and we had four winners of the night. We appreciated seeing several first-time attendees come to the holiday party as well, and the positive feedback received from the experience. On Wednesday, Jan. 10, hYePs participated in a “How to Run for Office” discussion. No politics, just process — and we’ll share more about the event in the February issue of BizNet.

Keep your eyes open for our February Trivia Night! This is a fun, interactive social event for our hYePs. If you have a coworker, spouse or friend who has a head full of random knowledge, bring him or her along. Then in March hYe will host a discussion on Budgeting 101 — a timely topic that always brings questions and great conversation from the crowd. We’ll have all the details for these upcoming events on our social media (hYeBloomington and #hYeBtown) as well as our e-communications.

Speaking of which … are you receiving our emails and following us on social media? Contact The Chamber at 812-336-6381 or info@chamberbloomington.org to be added to hYe communications. And you can find hYe on Facebook and Twitter as well!

Young Professionals Make a Difference

Congratulations to Danny Boy Draft Works IU on their ribbon cutting. They celebrated the grand opening of their new brewery downtown. Visit them at 208 S. Dunn St. or online at DannyBoyBeerWorks.com.

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Bloomington, IN 47408
Contact: Jenny Burton
812-606-5300

** Courtesy photo.
New Hires & Promotions

Werner Joins Strategic HR Solutions

Strategic HR Solutions, LLC, has announced that Lindsey Werner has joined the firm to further develop their growing portfolio of local and state accounts. Werner comes with a wealth of human resources knowledge and experience, having spent the last two years as the benefits administrator for Huse, Inc.

Awards & Designations

Knowlton Receives Realtor Emeritus Status

After 40 years of membership in the National Association of Realtors, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices would like to give a big “congratulations” to Scott Knowlton for receiving Realtor Emeritus status. Knowlton will be recognized at the general membership meeting for the BBOR on Dec. 7.

Prince Earns International Society of Arboriculture Qualification

The Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department announced that urban forestry staff member Kevin Prince recently received Tree Risk Assessment Qualification, or TRAQ, from the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). The TRAQ program promotes safety of people and property by providing a standard and systematic process for assessing tree risk.

Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department Recognizes Outstanding Partners

The Board of Park Commissioners presented awards of recognition to the Bloomington Rotary Club and CFC, Inc. The Bloomington Rotary Club received the November BRAVO award for exceptional volunteer service, while CFC, Inc. received the Parks Partner award for their collaboration with the Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department.

Opportunities & Events

Join Us for a Free Lunch

You are invited to attend our free Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Central Indiana Bowl for Kids’ Sake 2018 on Jan. 18 at 12 p.m. at Sherwood Oaks Christian Church, 2700 E. Rogers Road. Please RSVP by Jan. 12 to Danell Witmer at dwitmer@bigsindiana.org or call 812-929-2748.

City Commission on the Status of Women Seeks Nominations for Awards

The City of Bloomington Commission on the Status of Women is seeking nominees for the 2018 Woman of the Year, Emerging Leader and the Toby Strout Lifetime Contribution awards. The deadline for nominations is Jan. 19, 2018.Nomination forms at bloomington.in.gov/csw. Send completed nominations to owenss@bloomington.in.gov.

Friends and clients are asking for assistance and guidance in regards to sponsoring professional wine tastings. Many do not know where to start or how to get organized. Jeffery Schauss Wine Consultant will produce and direct your wine tastings for special occasions, holidays or office parties. Wine tasting is not the same as drinking it. Wine tasting is about education. If several wines are desired to be tasted it is very important to understand: proper glassware, how to look at wine, the purpose of swirling wine, desired to be tasted it is very important to understand: proper drinking it. Wine tasting is about education. If several wines are desired to be tasted it is very important to understand: proper glassware, how to look at wine, the purpose of swirling wine, that 80% of the taste is actually in your nose, how to properly sip the wine, how to experience the aftertaste (the finish), and the significance of tasting notes and definitions. Contact Jeffery Schauss Wine Consultant at jdschauss@hotmail.com to ask about fees for wine tasting services.

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Angel’s Touch Bloomington Cleaning Service LLC

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The Franklin Initiative Update

Celebrating Education in Our Community

By Jim Inman, director of marketing and communications

The Chamber’s Franklin Initiative hosted another Reality Store® on Wednesday, Dec. 6 at Batchelor Middle School on Bloomington’s south side. The middle school students engaged a number of Chamber volunteers to learn about living and working as an adult — housing, car payments, utilities, technology and clothing are just some of the areas the students visited to work with their budgets. It’s always fun to see the students work with their financial options to determine what they can afford and how to prepare for the future. Thank you to all the staff at Batchelor Middle School for their help with the day!

Our next Reality Store® will be held on Wednesday, April 11 at Jackson Creek Middle School. If you are interested in learning more about connecting with local students and helping with the Reality Store®, please contact The Chamber at 812-336-6381.

Did you know that we are always looking for people to share their professional experiences with local students? With our Speaker’s Bureau, Mock Interviews and Job Shadowing opportunities through The Franklin Initiative, there are many ways you can make a positive impact on local youth. Visit The Chamber’s website or call us — we would love to share your talents and experience!

By the time you are reading this issue of BizNet, nominations will have closed for our 2018 Educator of the Year Awards. Our selection committee will review the nominations submitted and then we will be contacting the winners about the event. The community is invited to join us on Wednesday, Feb. 21 at the Monroe Convention Center as we celebrate a variety of local educators. The Educator of the Year Awards will feature the Stinesville Quarry Choir for entertainment, and dinner will be served during the celebration. Tickets, tables and sponsorship opportunities are available on The Chamber’s website — ChamberBloomington.org.

D’Amico Named President & CEO of Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce

Phil D’Amico has been named president and CEO of The Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce. D’Amico formally accepted the offer extended by the organization’s board of directors.

D’Amico will assume his new duties on Thursday, Feb. 1, replacing Jep Conrad who left the position in July 2017. The announcement was made today by Chamber board chair and search committee member, Tony Stonger.

D’Amico comes to the position from Richmond, Indiana, where he served as president and CEO of the Wayne County Area Chamber of Commerce. Prior to working in Richmond, D’Amico was the chief marketing officer and business development manager for Majority Builders Inc. in South Bend, Indiana. D’Amico also has experience in broadcasting, hosting a weekly television program in South Bend for over ten years.

“I am extremely honored and humbled to lead this Chamber. I look forward to working with a talented staff and it will be a privilege to be part of the Bloomington community. Thank you to the search committee and Anne Bono for this opportunity and for their confidence,” said D’Amico.

“We are excited to welcome Phil to the Bloomington community, and to lead The Chamber. With his background in Chamber leadership, business and communication, we believe he will provide a new vision for The Chamber moving forward,” said Stonger. “We are confident that he can build on the continued success of The Chamber while enhancing our business community.”

The national executive search for The Chamber’s new president and CEO began in the summer of 2017 after Conrad resigned from the position. Anne Bono has served as the interim president and CEO as well as director of advocacy and public policy during the transition. Bono will step down as interim president and CEO when D’Amico begins on February 1, and continue solely in her director role.

“On behalf of The Chamber’s board of directors, I would like to thank Anne for her leadership during this time of transition. I also thank the members of the search committee who were committed to finding an exceptional leader for The Chamber,” added Stonger.
With “engagement season” well under way, brides and grooms will soon have their hands full as they seek to plan that ideal event that matches their personalities and — in today’s world of social media — their vision of Pinterest perfection.

For many of them, Bloomington or the surrounding area will be just the place to make these dreams come to life.

With a wide variety of options available for venues, activities available for guests to enjoy between celebrations, and often budget-friendly price tags, many couples — especially those with connections to Indiana University — are choosing Bloomington, Bedford or French Lick as their destination of choice. These cities’ vendors and venues alike, meanwhile, are adapting to meet the needs of couples for whom individuality is becoming a top priority.

“The great thing about Bloomington is you can have a country club wedding, a Lake Monroe wedding, a wedding at the beautiful chapel at IU,” said Haley Norwood, community ambassador and event planner for Kroger, which provides wedding-related services such as floral arrangements and wedding cakes. “There’s so much to choose from.”

A wedding weekend

More options mean more opportunities to make a wedding reflect who couples are, Norwood said. It also means plenty of activities to entertain guests during what is frequently becoming a wedding weekend, rather than just a wedding day.

“Here in Bloomington there is so much diversity and culture that there is always something going on, and I do believe there’s something for everyone,” said Norwood.

Increasingly couples are having their wedding parties and some family members arrive as early as Thursday night for a Saturday wedding, which

Stylish Weddings:

Technology, personalization and the “wedding weekend” are growing trends in local nuptials

By Kasey Husk

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PLANNING FOR THE BIG DAY: Choice of venue and support staff are key decisions

By Kacy Hook

When the time comes to plan a wedding, few decisions — save who someone is marrying — have more of an impact than the decision of where to have the wedding and who to work with.

Choosing the right venue, and with it the right staff, can go a long way toward making the entire event run smoothly. Couples need to consider issues like price point, requirements for setup, cleanup and services and seating capacity for a venue, but also their gut feeling.

A typical wedding weekend, then, often includes recreational activities Friday during the day, a rehearsal that evening and then a Saturday morning filled with wedding set-up and, most often for the women involved, primping. Several Bloomington salons have wedding suites where they can have hair and makeup for an entire bridal party, said Lisa LaMarca, event coordinator at the Monroe County Convention Center.

“Some just spend it at the pool, some want to go horseback riding, some go-go-carrying at the local go-cart track,” said Ryan Cooper, meeting and event planning manager at French Lick Resort, a popular wedding destination in southern Indiana. Others, he said, participate in an “Amazing Race”-style scavenger hunt on the property, a fun group activity.

While a wedding in a church is followed by a reception elsewhere, a wedding at a church “is a reason,” said Michael Korus, estimating that only 10 percent of these sorting his facility lies in Bloomington. “Especially when we are having couples that might want to go to IU and now that they are getting engaged and want to return to Bloomington.”

Prioritizing Individualization

When it comes to all of this, most couples are looking to create a wedding that fits their personality and their budget, local industry leaders say. That often means altering or updating traditional elements of a wedding for a more modern approach.

At the Monroe County Convention Center, for instance, every Saturday wedding date in 2018 is already booked. Couples who don’t have individual wedding coordinators should look to their venue for advice when planning weddings most people are getting engaged and want to return to Bloomington. “Frequently we are having clients are interested in holding both wedding ceremony and reception at the same place, with an emphasis on

do the whole wedding themselves, or at least just the reception flowers,” Fox said, noting that the company still often does wedding bouquets.

Couples’ personal values are also showing in the choices they make when it comes to food; the “eat local” movement that has flourished in places like Bloomington is sometimes reflected in wedding menus, LaMarca said. Couples often want wine from Oliver Winery, beer from a local brewery or liquor from Cardinal Spirits incorporated into their celebration. Others will choose old favorites for their wedding rehearsal dinners as well; one couple, LaMarca said, opted for Mother Bear’s pizza on their wedding eve.

“So many of our clients love Bloomington, and they want to share that love of the town with their family and their guests,” she said. “They want to share a piece of what brought them together.”

**Technology and weddings**

There’s no denying the enormous impact that technology has on everyday living, and planning and personalizing a wedding is no different.

When it comes to planning a wedding, few websites are better known for inspiring ideas — and anxiety — than Pinterest. The website allows couples to gather ideas, save what appeals to them and generally get a feel of what they want their wedding style to be.

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“The wonderful thing about Pinterest is it has opened a whole new world to brides to be able to create their vision and dream wedding, and for planners to be able to see it and guide them appropriately,” Norwood said.

Brides rarely come into Mary M’s Walnut House Flowers these days without a board full of pinned ideas for what they want in their own wedding bouquets, Fox said.

“They are still putting their own twist on it, they aren’t saying ‘this is exactly what I want,’” Fox said. “They’ll show me four or five different pictures of the same color and types of flowers but in different styles, and they leave it to us to come up with something in-between so it is their own unique style and not straight from a board.”

Having that resource also makes communication much simpler for out-of-town couples who are planning a wedding, Fox said. Technology that allows them to share pictures of what they are looking for back and forth essentially makes in-person meetings unnecessary.

Of course, Pinterest can sometimes make individuals planning their wedding anxious because they feel as if “they have this whole new level to live up to,” notes LaMarca, who emphasizes that she sees a lot of positive in the site as well.

“I like to talk them off the ledge,” said LaMarca. “Weddings aren’t a competition, weddings are personal. Focus on what makes it precious to you.”

In some cases, couples are using technology to essentially put a new spin on old traditions.

“Back in the day, people would put the little disposable cameras on the tables and say, ‘take pictures!’ and you’d get the
full effect of everybody’s perspective,” LaMarca said. “Today we have hashtags. Everybody sends their photos to your hashtag and you have this amazing plethora of fun perspectives from your guests.”

Likewise, at Stone Crest many couples are opting to eschew the handmade photo boards popular in the past, opting instead for a more modern approach.

“We have flat screen TVs that couples want to come in and put slideshows on,” Conklin said. “Pictures of the brides and groom growing up with their families — some that you laugh at, some that you cry at and some that just lift your spirits altogether. I think it’s a great way to incorporate technology, and it definitely saves space.”

Documenting the big day, too, is changing for many couples. While digital photography has long since become the norm for professional photographers, technology offers new ways of getting different perspectives. Of course, cool new “toys” don’t necessarily come without at least some disadvantages.

“I had one (couple) that used a drone to film the ceremony,” remembers Cooper of a wedding at the French Lick Resort. “They filmed the ceremony, but then they crashed it into a tree. It didn’t make it to the reception.”

Perhaps more importantly, however, is that some technologies are being used to bridge the gap between families who are far apart, LaMarca said. She remembers one bride this year who was devastated when her beloved grandmother took a fall that left her bedridden shortly before the wedding. She and the bride were able to come up with several options to ensure that her grandmother could watch the nuptials live from her bed, something that meant the world to all involved.

“Our most precious thing we have is time, and (to miss) those things that we put together and pour ourselves into at that moment of time — well, we don’t have to,” LaMarca said. “We can stream it. We can use social media to go live. We can skype.”

“I think we’ll probably see that grow as, of course, technology is ever expanding and increasing and I think that will get pulled into more weddings,” she adds.
Plan to Attend a Business Export Training Event

A Business Export Training event will take place on Thursday, Jan. 25 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. at Factory 12 Event Loft, 1235 Jackson St., Columbus, IN. This one-day training will inform attendees on: export development procedures, managing payment risks/currency risk mitigation, etc. For more information, visit bit.ly/2BKLOG1.

HAND Announces Schedule for 2018 Home Buyers Club Classes

The Bloomington Department of Housing and Neighborhood Development (HAND) will host four Home Buyers Club classes in 2018. The popular two-part class helps potential first-time home buyers understand and overcome the obstacles involved in realizing the goal of homeownership. For more information, visit bloomington.in.gov/housing/home-buyers-club or contact Dan Niederman at 812-349-3512 or niedermd@bloomington.in.gov.

Join us for the 8th Annual 100 Men Who Cook

The eighth annual 100 Men Who Cook will take place on Feb. 24 at the Monroe Convention Center. Doors will open at 6 p.m. All proceeds benefit Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Central Indiana. For more information, contact Tracey Coryea at tracey.coryea@oldnational.com or Danell Witmer at dwitmer@bigsindiana.org.

Other

Travel Leaders Forms Women-Only Travel Club

Travel Leaders is forming a women-only soft adventure travel club. The club will not have a membership fee and there is no obligation to participate in all of the trips. It’s anticipated that both a domestic and international trip will be offered annually. For more information, call Debbie Isom at 812-339-7800.

Ivy Tech Cook Center for Entrepreneurship Partners with Bloomington SCORE

Ivy Tech Community College-Bloomington’s Gayle & Bill Cook Center for Entrepreneurship and Bloomington SCORE have entered into a partnership agreement for Cook Center to provide space to SCORE for mentoring small business clients. For more information, visit ivytech.edu/entrepreneurship.

Holiday World Planning $3.5 Million in Upgrades

Holiday World announced $3.5 million in upgrades for the 2018 season. The improvements include an elephant-themed water park for kids, a themed maze for Halloween Weekends, stunt shows and more. Holiday World & Splashin’ Safari opens for the 2018 season in May. For more information, visit HolidayWorld.com.

Newsletter Available From South Central Indiana Housing Opportunities

South Central Indiana Housing Opportunities (SCIHO) is an independent nonprofit housing developer based in Bloomington, Indiana. SCIHO is launching a new e-newsletter, “The Home Front,” and we’d love to send it to you. For more information, visit bit.ly/2CpxNeE.

West Side Tractor Founders Say “Thanks” with $1 Million Check to Employees

West Side Tractor Sales surprised employees with an early holiday gift. Founders Richard and Mary Benck signed over $1 million to employees as a thank you for their hard work in contributing to the success of the company. West Side is a third generation family business celebrating its 55th anniversary this year.

Mayor Flips Ceremonial Switch as City Hall Begins Realizing Solar Power Benefits

The mayor has flipped the ceremonial switch to officially begin realizing the benefits of solar power for City Hall. In late July, the mayor announced plans to install photovoltaic installations citywide, capable of producing five megawatts of solar power.

Monroe Hospital Helps Boys and Girls Have a Great Christmas

Monroe Hospital participated in the Salvation Army Angel Tree drive. 46 boys and girls had a great Christmas thanks to the kindness and generosity of Monroe Hospital staff.

Modern Masterpiece LLC is a husband-and-wife-owned painting and cleaning company in Bloomington, Indiana. Johnny manages the painting department and has over a decade of painting experience. He specializes in commercial, residential, interior, and exterior painting and takes pride in his work. Liz oversees the cleaning department and has her MBA in Entrepreneurship. She specializes in commercial, residential and property management needs. For more information visit our website at PrimeAndRoll.com. We provide free quotes.
events and artists that they might otherwise have to go to other markets to see.”

The facility — which is funded largely through ticket sales, facility rentals, donations, and sponsorships with about 6 percent of its budget coming from IU — also rents space for various public and private events, among them weddings, graduations and fundraisers.

Construction on the IU Auditorium, which would be built out of locally-sourced Indiana limestone, began in 1938 as a Federal Works Agency project. It was at the time a somewhat unusual step for then-IU President Herman B Wells to take, given that the United States had for nearly a decade been weathering the worst economic depression in its history.

“When most other universities at the time were cutting back on their funding for arts programs, President Wells was more visionary,” said Talbert. “He decided that the way to help grow this campus would be to invest in the arts.”

The auditorium, which today seats 3,200 people, opened its doors in March 1941.

Today, the auditorium typically brings about 15 performances to its stage each season, some of which are single-run shows while others can run for several days, Talbert said. Usually this number includes five Broadway shows, then auditorium staff try to select at least one performance from
Continued from page 14

several other genres, including dance, comedy, world music and arts, and spoken word. Speakers have included comedian David Sedaris and chef Anthony Bourdain, as well as less traditional offerings like a live showing of The Price Is Right.

Booking, Talbert said, is an art. Auditorium leadership needs to have a finger on the pulse of the arts community and of the Bloomington community at large to know what will resonate with the audience. Staff members not only talk with patrons about what they’d like to see, they also do a formal research study on the subject each year.

Another part of the story, she notes, is knowing not only what patrons know they want to see, but what they don’t know they want to see but will enjoy. In November, the auditorium presented The Knights, an innovative New York chamber orchestra that few people would have known to request.

“Everyone was completely mesmerized by the evening and left so grateful for having had that experience of something they would not have been able to pick out themselves,” she said of the performance.

The auditorium also seeks to offer learning opportunities with many of the shows it presents, Talbert said. “Almost every time an artist or touring show comes, we create a series of programs that connect the (IU) students and K-12 students, as well as the community,” with the artists coming through, she said.

These can include things like master classes from a touring Broadway cast, pre-show talks given by a local expert on subject matter being addressed in a performance, interactions with behind-the-stage people for those studying wardrobe or stage design, and more. Participation in these programs, as well as the number offered, have grown dramatically; in recent years numbers have jumped from about 600 people participating in about 20 programs, to 3,000 participating in 75 programs, Talbert said.

“We are continuing to grow those programs that are hopefully going to just grow and develop the arts patrons of tomorrow, as well as enrich the experience of a number of students on campus through the types of interdisciplinary programs we are trying to create,” she said.

In the past, the IU Auditorium’s strategic plan was entitled “Our Community’s Gathering Place.” While that plan has since been replaced, the idea of the auditorium as a “gathering place” is one that continues to resonate strongly with Talbert. Many people have experienced some of the most important moments of their lives at the auditorium, she said, whether it is a school graduation or their wedding day. Others have enjoyed the sometimes transformative magic of a great show and the connections that come from sharing it with others.

And that, she said, is what she hopes will continue for at least another 75 years.

“There is nothing like being in a room with hundreds of other people experiencing the exact same thing as you, live,” she said, noting that a study has shown the heartrates of people watching theatre tend to sync up as they watch together. “In this day and age where we are on the one hand becoming more and more isolated through the devices we have at our disposal, on the other we have these venues — not just the auditorium, the athletics and music and drama (schools) — these places where people can experience something live together and be able to connect with others in a way that is completely unique from any other type of experience. That’s the impact.”
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