

Greetings, Friends!

First, I want to say thank you for supporting The Fischer Theatre since we reopened our doors on September 21, 2019. This was a dream of our community for nearly 3 decades, and an incredible gift to Danville and the surrounding areas. Efforts to renovate the building were finally made possible through the generous contribution of Julius W. Hegeler II, who funded the physical renovations of the classic structure, allowing us to open the doors and invite our patrons in to experience the arts inside of this magnificent landmark.

The mission of our foundation is, “We believe art is vital to a good life.” Our purpose is to fund and oversee the restoration, maintenance, and operations of the Historic Fischer Theatre for all to experience the arts in this local treasure. The many Board members and staff who have led the organization through the last 5 years believe in this mission and have carried on despite a multitude of setbacks and challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, staff turnover, and the ever-increasing costs of supplies, insurance, and utilities, to name a few.

While the Fischer has pressed forward through these challenges, we have reached the moment in time where we must further engage our patrons, supporters, and biggest fans to help us continue so that we can remain strong for years to come. We are excited to announce the ways our Board and staff are working behind the scenes to bolster our organization, and I will get to that soon, but first, I want to share with the public some facts that are not well known.

- When the Fischer reopened in September of 2019, we did have a beautifully restored auditorium, lobby, and second floor, with many infrastructure and system improvements; however, half of the theatre remains unfinished. There are two levels that are completely unfinished above the main lobby and a large basement below the stage that is in its original state. Currently we have no dressing rooms or bathrooms backstage which limits our ability to appeal to many touring acts.
- The facility was ready to be opened to the public for events, but the Foundation did not and does not have an endowment or any significant amount of funds to serve as an engine or nest egg for operations. We operate entirely based upon event revenue, grant funding, and the generosity of donors. Additionally, to get the project across the finish line, our Foundation had to secure a \$500,000 mortgage to bring the project to completion for opening day.
- It costs ~\$1,000/day to keep our theatre running. This is \$30,000/month that we must generate to break even. Based on our current event revenue, we have a deficit of nearly \$11,000/month on average. This is not due to high wages (as we are very lean with staffing), but due to our outstanding mortgage, costly utility bills, building insurance costs, maintenance on such a large, historic structure, etc.
- We do not receive any city or government support, as many historic theatres do in other communities, including tax dollars like the hotel/motel tax—which exist to support organizations that improve the quality of life in the city, a mission we strongly believe we fulfill.
- We have only 1 full-time staff and 2 part-time support staff who provide all the paid support for every event you see taking place here at the theatre. The rest of the support comes entirely from an army of volunteers who provide 80% of our manpower from Board leadership, to popping popcorn, to scanning tickets. (Thank you, Volunteers!)

The hard truth is that the budget deficit we are experiencing makes it impossible for us to hire additional staff. The lack of staff makes it difficult to open more frequently to the community due to the limitations of being human. The Board and staff realize that we must strategize to create a more sustainable business model, so we are shifting to an emphasis on fundraising, grant seeking, and engaging our community members and donors (that’s you!) who are passionate about our mission for support. If we are not successful, the longevity of the theatre is in question, and we want to say it clearly – We need your help.

The team at the Fischer is continually pursuing grant opportunities, and we are also rolling out other opportunities to gain support in the months ahead (drumroll please). We are pleased to announce the 2025 Fischer Theatre Board Fundraising Series! Our Board of Directors is hosting quarterly fundraisers at the Fischer Theatre that are specifically chosen to reach a broad audience. These events are intended to provide immersive and engaging arts experiences to our community while simultaneously generating funds to support our operations. Mark your calendars for:



March 29th: Royal Premier & Parade – Calling all Princes and Princesses to the most royal of events at the Historic Fischer Theatre! Enter a magical setting with many royal characters to greet you. Decorate your crown, collect wildflowers from Snow White, get your hair tinsel, get a temporary royal crest tattoo, snap a photograph with your favorite character, get a souvenir cup filled with a themed beverage from the café, and participate in the scavenger hunt for Cinderella’s glass slippers. Princes and Princesses line up for the Royal Parade across the Fischer Theatre Stage for the guests to admire then settle in for a showing of Tangled with a lunchbox full of treats.

June 28th: Fake Wedding – Have you ever wanted to crash a wedding? Now you get to, but it’s encouraged! Dress in your formal attire and sip on cocktails in the lobby. Find your seats in the auditorium as the most beautiful and elaborate wedding ceremony takes place. Who will the bride and groom be? You’ll just have to wait and see. Following the wedding, enjoy delicious food and cake, awkward family toasts, and dancing with the mother of the bride to the music of a surprise band. Party the night away with strangers and friends, celebrating love and marriage.

October 24th & 25th, October 31st & November 1: Rocky Horror Show – Four opportunities to experience the Fischer Theatre’s live production of the Rocky Horror Show! Give yourself over to absolute pleasure.

December 14: The Polar Bus Express – All Aboard the Polar Express! Board the bus offsite in your coziest pajamas and embark on an adventure to the Fischer Theatre. Complete with golden tickets, jingle bells, and a hot chocolate stop, you won’t be disappointed when you reach the North Pole for a showing of The Polar Express in the Fischer Theatre Auditorium.

We appreciate every time you patronize the Fischer, whether it be a \$5 or \$100 ticket, your attendance allows us to keep our doors open. We hope you will attend these events and more in support of this incredible community resource. Strong attendance at our events allows us to continue offering a diverse range of programming. When attendance is low, it directly impacts our ability to bring in a variety of performances, films, and community events. Your support by attending, spreading the word, and bringing friends helps ensure we can keep providing high-quality arts and entertainment for our community.

If you are compelled to help us fulfill our mission as a sponsor or donor, I would love to chat with you about how we can make that a reality. We need your generosity now more than ever. If you have an opportunity for us to share about our mission and our need for financial support to a community group, please let us know. You can reach me at president@fischertheatre.com or at 217-474-2978.

If you are compelled to make a donation now, you can use this link: https://www.paypal.com/donate/?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=VN82ZQ86W7KQG&ssrt=1740168513149

Or mail a check to:

Vermilion Heritage Foundation
P.O. Box 926
Danville, IL 61832

If you have made it this far in reading, thank you for your perseverance and interest in our organization! We are very proud of how far we've come, and we remain optimistic that we can keep the marquee shining with your patronage and support.

Most Sincerely,

Ashton Greer
Vermilion Heritage Foundation
Board President

