

Art Saves Lives: Reflecting on a career in the arts

Eloise Breikjern to retire from position as Executive Director of FMCT

FARGO, ND – When Eloise Breikjern began her career as an arts administrator, she was handed a pin. On that pin were printed three simple words: “Art saves lives.”

In her seven years as Executive Director of Fargo Moorhead Community Theatre (FMCT), Breikjern has been reminded of those words time and time again.

“I’m really grateful for the opportunities I’ve had to witness, whether it’s the actors or the patrons, their reaction to things and to hear their positive comments,” Breikjern said. “Just knowing that a particular production or education class touched somebody’s life and made it better, that’s the reward.”

Breikjern will retire from her position at FMCT this December, concluding a long and storied career that has included roles with the Red River Boys Choir, the Fargo Theatre, Trollwood Performing Arts School, and the Minnesota Orchestra.

Since joining FMCT as Executive Director in 2013, Breikjern has overseen an increase in the number of shows produced each year, a revitalization of FMCT’s educational programming, and an expansion of the theatre’s reach within the community. And Breikjern attributes these successes over the past seven years to the hard work and collaboration of her staff.

“The entire staff really works together well,” Breikjern said. “Great art happens when people collaborate, and that’s really what I’ve seen. I always tell them I’m the team captain and they’re the players. One can’t be without the other.”

Breikjern’s departure comes at a time of transition and uncertainty for FMCT. The theatre is learning to navigate the challenges of safely producing theatre in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as developing plans to restore their venue after a structural issue was discovered last December. But despite these obstacles, she has faith that the organization will continue to grow and evolve in her absence.

“My greatest wish for this organization is that it doesn’t get stale, that it keeps growing and changing and really becomes a destination for people who come to our community,” Breikjern said.

While Breikjern’s career in the arts is coming to a close, she assures that art will always be part of her life. She will continue to support theatre in Fargo-Moorhead as a patron, a donor, and perhaps, after a well-deserved break, even a volunteer—because she understands how essential it is.

Art entertains. Art heals. Art builds community. And art saves lives.

“I truly believe that. Especially as we are in this pandemic, what’s the first thing you do when you go home? You turn on a movie. You watch TV. You read a book,” Breikjern said. “It’s art. It’s all art.”

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