

MINOT SERTOMA CLUB GIVES THE GIFT OF MUSIC

Minot State University professor Kenneth Bowles (sitting) performs in a Western Plains Opera Company production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. The show helped celebrate the recent donation of a hearing loop system provided by the Minot Sertoma Club.

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Music is arguably one of life's sweetest indulgences. It is endlessly versatile, and has the amazing ability to bring people together. On the opposite end of the spectrum, it can also drive people apart under the right circumstances.

For example, can you imagine attending your favorite concert, and not being able to hear the music or interact with the people around you? It would be incredibly difficult, depressing and isolating.

In order to prevent anyone from feeling this kind of isolation, the Minot Sertoma Club, of Minot, North Dakota, set out on a mission to help spread music, and advocate hearing health.

One year ago, the Minot Sertoma Club partnered with the Minot Area Community Foundation to provide the Ann Nicole Nelson Hall with a hearing loop system. A hearing loop system is designed to provide amplified sounds directly to individuals with hearing aids. The majority of hearing aids today are manufactured to include a telecoil or "t-coil." Once this technology is turned on with a hearing loop system, it is designed to send the speaker's voice directly into recipient's hearing aids, providing outstanding clarity to those with hearing loss.

Now, after receiving a matching \$5,000 grant from St. Joseph's Community Health Foundation of Minot, the Minot Sertoma Club has installed a new hearing loop at the Minot State University Amphitheatre.

The theatre seats 440 people, and holds both public and private events including: Orchestra performances, The Great Plains Opera, recitals, graduations and choir concerts.

Neil Scharpe, the Sertoma Board Chair of Minot, and a member of Sertoma for 30 years, is excited about the implementation of the new hearing loop system.

“It will allow people to have full access,” Scharpe said. “We hope people will get excited about it.”

The Minot Sertoma Club has maintained a 20 year relationship with Minot State University. Scharpe said the university has a tremendous communications disorders department, as well as an audiology program and deaf education program.

Scharpe is an alumnus of Minot State University, and currently works at the school. His professional background stems heavily in hearing health, which has played a major role in influencing his involvement and passion for Sertoma.

In order to celebrate the recent induction of the hearing loop system, the Minot Sertoma Club provided vouchers to anyone interested in attending a production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat from March 31 to April 3.

Charles Galloway, a pastor from Westhope, North Dakota, said he made the drive to view the performance, and would happily do it again.

“It was a great turn out, and I could hear everything clearly,” Galloway said. “It will make a huge difference in the community. I can’t wait to use it more.”

Galloway has been deaf since he was two-years-old, and is familiar with the hard work and generosity of Sertoma. He said his first hearing aids were provided by the Dubuque Iowa Sertoma Club, and it helped change his life. Galloway concluded by saying he is grateful for that Sertoma does, and referenced the organization as a “big deal.”

In time, Scharpe says his club hopes to continue promoting and assisting public theatres and musical venues by providing new hearing loop systems.

“We have a big vision,” Scharpe said. “If this works well, we’d like to continue looping other venues, furthering our mission and helping more people.”