

Winning Poster Design Goes Full Circle

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WINNING POSTER DESIGN GOES FULL CIRCLE

At the Region 5 Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) this year, Sophomore Ellie Brouwer received first place in the publicity category for a poster she designed for the Dordt theatre department's fall mainstage production of "Our Town." It's the same category in which, nearly 17 years ago, Instructor of Graphic Design Vaughn Donahue was the first-ever award recipient.



V. Donahue

"When I found out that I placed first, I was very excited and maybe felt a little disbelief," says Brouwer.

The poster design process had begun months before, when Brouwer met with Theatre Professor Laurel Koerner to discuss the vision for the play and to review a mood board—a collage of color schemes, main themes, important scenes, and symbols for design inspiration.

"'Our Town' has a lot to say about living in community," explains Koerner. "A visual concept we worked with as a design team from the beginning was that of a mosaic: distinct pieces that fit together and create a whole. Recognizing this visual metaphor for the play's themes, Ellie captured the play's settings and moods in a lovely design reminiscent of a stained-glass triptych containing the town, the mountain beyond, and a moon glowing above."

Donahue was also impressed with Brouwer's work and encouraged her to submit the poster to KCACTF, a festival that supports and celebrates all things theatre.

At the festival in Des Moines in January, Brouwer had a chance to meet with theatre professionals who specialized in design. "It was exciting to enter my work into a competition and have people outside of Dordt see my work," she says.

Donahue had a similar experience when his poster for a production of "James Joyce's The Dead" was reviewed, which



JAMIN VERVELDE (99)

"I love looking back on what I created in high school and comparing it to what I'm able to make now," says Ellie Brouwer.

he says was a life-changing experience for him.

"The experience at KCACTF cemented my desire to enter the field of design," Donahue recalls. "If it hadn't been for

that opportunity, I'm not sure I would be doing what I'm doing today as a designer and as a faculty member here at Dordt in the Art and Design Department."

Donahue says it's key to have his students gain practical experience by having them create designs for real clients, like Brouwer did for the theatre department. "It's good practice for what their future career paths might look like."

Brouwer loves the closeness of Dordt's graphic design program. "Dordt isn't specifically a design school with really high competition, but the program pushes me to do my best work," she says. "I love all the other students in my major, and it's been fun to get to know and work with them."

Brouwer is grateful that Donahue encouraged her to enter the competition. "Vaughn is one of my favorite professors because he pushes our creativity without forcing his own agenda. After being in Vaughn's classes for two years, he knows my style and how to push me out of my comfort zone."

ANA TIMMER ('20)

OTHER THEATRE ACCOLADES

The Dordt University Theatre Department received many accolades and awards at KCACTF this year. Some of those recognized include:

Senior Lindsay Kuiper placed first in the sound design category for her work in "The Importance of Being Earnest."

Senior Tommy Shin (pictured) was one of 10 students selected to direct one of the student-written 10-minute plays that received readings at the festival.

Senior Sommer Schaap's one-act play "Almost Lifelong" was one of just three one-acts out of more than 50 submitted to receive a reading at the festival. Schaap also advanced to the semi-final round of the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship competition.

