

## **The Sandusky State Theatre** – Sandusky Register 10-12-2019

SANDUSKY — The walls of the Sandusky State Theatre’s dressing room hallway are speaking. Thousands of names adorn on the walls, sharing the rich history of acts and performers who visited the theatre since at least the 1990s. “The hallway predates many of the people who are here right now,” theatre executive director Chris Parthemore said. “It’s a tradition that when an artist comes into the theatre, they sign the wall.”

Eagle-eyed viewers can spot comedian Ron White’s signature as well as special cast members from past musical performances. And do you remember when “The Price is Right” visited? They signed the wall twice, once for each visit.

The signature hallway is a lesser-known feature likely because it’s not accessible from the main floor. Even Parthemore, who walks the hallway more often than most, doesn’t know all of the signatures. He often finds new signatures while walking through the hall. “If you take your time to look around you can find some crazy signatures,” Parthemore said.

Locals can see the hallways of signatures by taking a tour of the historic building. Parthemore said the theatre is always open for tours with the public, but asked people to call ahead to schedule a time. “Anyone is welcome to come in and we’d be happy to show off the building to anybody,” Parthemore said. “We’re very proud of all the work that’s gone into it and the upkeep.”

### A history lesson

The theatre’s 91st anniversary is today.

A Nov. 1 gala, with an “Under the Sea” theme, will commemorate the grand opening. There are still tickets available, and it’s the theatre’s biggest fundraiser of the year.

“It’s important for the community to know that theatres always struggle,” Parthemore said. The building is closing in on its 100-year anniversary, in 2028, and the cost of operating and keeping the theatre up to date is substantial. “We’re really lucky that the community has gotten behind us and is generous in helping us reach our goals,” Parthemore said. “Without the community’s support, no theatre will be successful.”

So what other gems does the theatre have behind-the-scenes? There is an original organ, which was built in Lima in 1928. In 1961, the theatre was forced to sell the organ, which was bought by a man from Michigan. After his death, the organ returned to Sandusky. “We got really lucky that the organ came home,” Parthemore said. After it returned, a group raised funds to have the instrument restored and it is still in working condition today. “Nowadays, we have something for everyone,” Parthemore said.

### The arts and community

The theatre hosts concerts, children’s education programs and camps, Broadway national tours and is a gathering place for the community. Parthemore believes the arts are vital to any successful community and is aware of the importance of driving arts education and accessibility for children. “We recently had 1,500 school kids from kindergarten to fifth grade in the theatre to see the Children’s Theatre of Cincinnati,” Parthemore said. “Those are our best days. You can see how excited they are when they visit.”

To help support the state theatre, Parthemore encourages the community to attend shows. “The more people who use the theatre, the more big-name shows we can have,” Parthemore said. “Just spreading the word and supporting the theatre is a great first step. Being involved is the best way to support us.”

