



# A Message from Michael B. Elkins:

An inevitable occasion has arrived. It is time to say goodbye to the Gift.

For over thirty years, a good portion of my summer and fall months have been occupied with planning for the annual production of the Gift A Christmas Carol. What began in the summer of 1985 as an idea to produce a musical theatre version of A Christmas Carol and offer it to the public free-of-charge grew into an event that has been enjoyed and treasured by over one hundred and thirty thousand people.

Throughout its thirty-year history our Gift has had one unique purpose: to uplift all who participated as performers or audiences while reminding them of our responsibility to be generous and compassionate to those around us. Through the efforts of these unbelievably talented and generous people, according to our records, nearly 50 tons of canned food, and well over 40,000 toys were collected and distributed grateful people in need throughout our local community over the last 30 years.

The character, generosity and creative spirit of the Gift organizers has been a consistent and indomitable force in meeting the many demands and surprises that have accompanied annual productions over the years. These included everything from parking conflicts to electrical outages, leaking theatre roofs, storms, flooded theatre floors and even the illness of company members. Our Christmas Carol family has also endured the loss of loved ones.

We have also celebrated onstage marriage proposals, wedding showers and presentations of numerous, well-deserved awards and honors to members of the Christmas Carol family. Lifelong friendships have been formed as thousands of performers, young and old have developed and shared their talents with grateful audiences. Throughout the years our family members have always stood together, providing comfort, support and assistance to our friends and colleagues in their times of joy, sorrow and need.

Last year we celebrated the thirtieth year of the Gift by producing and presenting the most elaborate and professional caliber production to date. Audiences filled the theatre to capacity and record amounts of food and toys were collected and distributed. Anyone who has supported the Gift over these years can be proud of its history of service to our community and its lessons of compassion and generosity

We have been blessed to be part of a unique family. And, as with all families, we all knew that, inevitably the time would come when it was time to say goodbye to our annual event. Life is full of passages and it is time for our talented and dedicated family members to move on to new phases of their lives. We will miss our times together, but we should always remember the wonderful joy we felt in our hearts and saw on the faces of our grateful and supportive audiences.

I will miss you all and the time spent together, immensely. But, the thousands of memories of joyous times spent with all of you will always make me smile, bring a tear to my eyes and keep my Christmas tree burning brightly in my heart. As Tiny Tim so perfectly expressed it 'God Bless us everyone! And in the words of my favorite old miser...'I have to go now...I'm spending Christmas with me family'

With unending gratitude and affection, Michael