



Photo by Eyan Brason

THIS NEW ORGANIZATION OF BROADWAY PROFESSIONALS HAVE A MISSION TO BRING THEIR COMMUNITY TOGETHER THROUGH VOLUNTEERING AND ACTIVISM. THEY'RE JUST GETTING STARTED BUT BROADWAY SERVES IS ALREADY 'BEING THE CHANGE.'

BROADWAY Serves



On Wednesday, March 21, 2012, the Million Hoodie March in NYC's Union Square brought a handful of theater professionals from the Broadway community together in response to the death of Trayvon Martin. While at the rally, would-be co-founders [Dana Marie Ingraham](#), [Dionne Figgins](#) and [Kimberly Marable](#) recognized the absence of and the need for an organization for theater professionals to be able to discuss and take an active role in social issues and current events. Broadway Serves! was born. The demand for the group was evident: the Facebook page reached almost 500 members in a week.

Why is Broadway Serves! important?

DMI: Dionne, Kimberly and I were at the Million Hoodie Rally for Trayvon Martin in Union Square. We were there among other performers from the industry in the crowd, and agreed that it would be great if there was an actual organization of performers that could come together and perform and help out in the community at events and with projects that centered around issues we felt strongly about.

DF: We began to imagine what it would be like if the arts community came out as a unit to support

such causes, lending our voices to bring visibility to injustice and people in need. We could sing songs of hope, dance and bring joy while fighting for a cause. Our gifts [could be] put to use for the betterment of mankind. A utopian thought? Not when you think of all the possibilities.

How is Broadway Serves! Different from Broadway Cares and Broadway Impact?

KM: We're different in every way. Broadway Serves! as an organization really acts as a facilitator or liaison between theater professionals and service opportunities. We are a centralized location for people to find more information on service programs that they may not have previously known about. And unlike Broadway Cares or Broadway Impact, we're not limited in the causes our members can rally around. In fact we hope to collaborate with these organizations to bring attention to the AIDS epidemic and marriage equality, but ALSO any and every other important issue. If there is something that our members want to discuss or act on, we encourage them to bring it to the Broadway Serves! forum, so that we may collectively find a way to get involved.

DF: If someone has a cause they want to support, we will help them get organized. Whether it be a walk or benefit concert, we want to connect our members to opportunities to give back. The possibilities are



Photo by Ryan Brinson



Photos by Ryan Brinson

endless.

DMI: Broadway Cares and Broadway Impact are both wonderful organizations that are centered around very specific issues. What Broadway Serves! hopes to do, is to help facilitate discussion and action around many different issues affecting the world (ie: homelessness, poverty, hunger, disease, bullying, etc.)

What do you hope to accomplish with Broadway Serves!?

DF: It is our mission to encourage Broadway community members to make the act of service a priority. Before we are artists, we are people, people who are at our best when we are using our talents and gifts to affect change in other people's lives. Broadway Serves! gives its members the opportunity to reconnect with the community at large. It is our wish to use our talents to make the act of giving enjoyable, for both giver and receiver.

KM: Oftentimes people don't get involved simply because they don't know where or how to find out about what is happening. By creating a central location for people to get information and share ideas, we're hoping to change that.

DMI: Art has always played an important role in societal change. You can look at music, art, literature, and dance throughout history and be so richly

informed about the cultural, societal, and political worldview of the times. We need to keep dialoging about what's going on in the world, because life affects art affects life.

How have you kicked off Broadway Serves!? What was your jumping off point and what

KM: We decided to launch Broadway Serves! by participating in this year's AIDS Walk NY, and boy was it a smashing success! In a month's time we accumulated over 30 cast and crew members from 10 different Broadway and Off-Broadway shows, and raised over \$8,500.

DF: I was truly inspired by the group of artists and crew members assembled, some walking before a matinee on the last day of an 8 show week, all dedicated to lending a helping hand to fight a disease that continues to be a worldwide epidemic. It was truly a great day of service!

We are also working with the Clinton Family Inn, which is a homeless shelter for women and their children, in their writing program at the Children's Museum. The Tuesday after the AIDS Walk, we went to the Children's Museum and worked with the women and their children, leading them in song, sharing lunch, and teaching the women confidence builders to help them share their writing for an upcoming informal reading, which we will also be attending and participating in.

It was a learning experience for all involved. The women were so receptive to have professional performers assist them with not just performance skills, but life skills, that can be used in in everyday life.

DMI: Our Facebook page has also been a wonderful tool in igniting discussion about current events. Broadway Serves! members post articles of interest about issues going on in the world, as well as opportunities for service.

What plans/events do you have on the horizon?

DF: We have already begun partnering with other service organizations and plan on beginning service initiatives of our own. We are working on organizing a team to walk for Avons Breast Cancer Walk. We are in talks with "Broadway Builds" to assist them with an initiative they are working on. We are supporting SAG/AFTRA's BookPALS, which is a reading program for underprivileged children in NY.

KM: We're also in the planning stages of our own monthly event called "Sing and Serve," where volunteers will alternate between serving food and performing at local soup kitchens. Down the line, we're also looking to have a satellite program for touring professionals to be able to get involved in the community while on the road.

DMI: Although the AIDS Walk has physically been completed, fundraising is still continuing until June 15th, so we're still involved with that project. The response to Broadway Serves! has been great from within the Broadway community, so we're happy that people see a need for and have a desire to be of service.

DF: There are more than enough opportunities to bring the Broadway community out to volunteer for a worthy cause, using our gifts and talents to affect change at the grass roots level, face to face with those in need. It is our sincere wish that we can be that link to help other artists "be the change [they] want to see in the world." We want the city to know, Broadway is here and we're ready to Serve!

In 20 words or less, what is Broadway Serves!?

DF: Broadway Serves! looks to connect the Broadway community to opportunities to be the change [we] want to see in the world.

KM: Broadway Serves! is an organization devoted to "being the change" by engaging and uniting theater professionals through service and activism.

DMI: We are a group of your favorite performers striving to "be the change we want to see in the world!"



Castmembers from Sister Act, Memphis and Spider-Man: Turn Off The Dark at the AIDS Walk New York on May 20.