

A FIRM FOUNDATION: ACTORS HELPING ACTORS

THE SCREEN ACTORS GUILD FOUNDATION

The last four SAG dues statements have included an appeal for a contribution to the SAG



Newest Advisory Board Member George Clooney

Foundation and its many programs. The response to these dues-mailing appeals has been terrific, beyond our most optimistic expectations. We actors have always given freely to performers who are in less fortunate circumstances than ourselves. There has been an outpouring of support by

a broad cross section of membership.

We now have figures for the first three mailings which are almost complete. Contributions to the programs and the Foundation General Fund totalled \$293,597; by the time all late contributions have been tabulated, the figure will be well over \$300,000. We consider this response to be outstanding, astonishing, most encouraging and, above all, heart-warming.

What makes it astonishing is the fact that the Foundation's programs and the Foundation itself remain virtually unknown to most Guild members. Of course, the thrust of programs called Membership Assistance Fund, AIDS Task Force and John L. Dales Scholarship Fund is obvious and clearly, many members wanted to support those programs. But how many are truly aware of how the Foundation is set up, how the programs work and even, in some instances, what they actually are and whom they benefit.

JOHN L. DALES SCHOLARSHIP

You must be a member of the Guild to apply for a scholarship, but the program was originally set up to help members send their children to college. That is still its most popular use. Members can, however, apply for themselves as well, such as a former child member who is graduating from high school or a mature per-

former who wishes to go to college (or back to college) to develop another area of work. There are, of course, eligibility requirements.

BOOK PALS

BOOK PALS is a SAG Foundation program which has received citations from the Mayor of Los Angeles, the Governor of California and the Library Commission of the President of the United States, yet few SAG members know that it exists let alone what it does. PALS stands for Performing Artists for Literacy in Schools and it consists, quite simply, of professional actors reading to small groups of kids in public schools, particularly in disadvantaged neighborhoods. The program is national, but actual operations are organized locally in conjunction with the local public school system. It is a great place for our members to exercise their talents, creating what is sometimes a child's first experience in the enjoyment of books by reading to him or her with the kind of drama which only an actor can bring.

THE PROFESSIONAL ACTOR'S SEMINAR

The Professional Actor's Seminar is not an acting class or artistic conservatory, but one-day conferences designed to help actors (and would-be actors) learn about and deal with the purely business aspects of being an actor. Once again, the program is national. Seminars are held on an occasional basis in many SAG branch cities. The registration fee is minimal.

Much to the surprise of many members, the Screen Actors Guild Foundation, Inc. is not a part of the Screen Actors Guild, but a separate not-for-profit corporation. (It must be separate by law). Of course, the ties are close: the Foundation was created by the Guild; Board members are SAG members and SAG staff executives; and offices are located at the Guild's facilities. But the operation and funding of the two organizations are entirely separate, as are the objectives of each. (For the Guild, it is negotiat-

ing and enforcing, on behalf of screen actors, contracts with producers. For the Foundation, it is creating and operating certain charitable and educational programs which further public appreciation and understanding of actors and the art of acting.) Contributions to the Foundation – and not to the Guild – are tax-deductible for the contributor to an extent determined by law and by his or her tax circumstances.

There is, quite obviously, a great need to make the working of the Foundation and its programs much better known to Guild members. To that end, future articles in this newsletter will deal with each program and the Foundation itself, explaining, one by one, the background, performance, resources and goals of each and elaborating on points such as those mentioned above.

In addition to supporting our work financially, which we hope you will continue to do, Guild members need to know exactly how beneficial the work of the Foundation and its program truly is and exactly how you, as members, can be the beneficiaries to those programs if the need arises. The idea is to have a Screen Actors Guild



PHOTO BY GARY LEONARD

Executive Director Marcia Smith

Foundation in which we all know we have a stake, something we are familiar with, which we help to support and regard with a real and lasting pride. And with Marcia Smith taking on the role as our new Executive Director of the Foundation, our future is even more promising.

Let me express our thanks for your fabulous generosity and support in the dues-mailing appeals. Just imagine what it will be like when you know more about us! So please, let's not consider this a wrap – but rather just the start of a long shoot. Keep up the good work!

– Philip Sterling, SAG Foundation President