

Spirit Series is Bringing Its Living History School Programs to Arizona

Arizona is the latest state where Spirit Series is offering K-12 literacy, experiential and core value programs for underserved communities.

PHOENIX, ARIZONA, USA, February 26, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On February 22, the beautiful Paradise Valley, Arizona, home of Karen Castles Gray was the site of an exciting fundraising event for [Spirit Series](#), an organization that introduces innovative, drama-based Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and literacy to schools. In addition to raising funds, this event organized by J. Moser and Company, was an important introduction to influential philanthropic and education-minded individuals about the potential benefits of the program to Arizona communities.

During the evening, attendees enjoyed casino games, a silent auction, music, dinner, and networking. "I love that they teach children about real-life heroes in our history," said Gray, a Spirit Series Board Member, who moved to the Valley three years ago and loves it.

Gray's co-host for the evening was Spirit Board Chair William Fay. The Washington State native, and Stanford and UCLA Film School graduate is an Executive Producer. Happily for filmgoers, he moved from writing and acting early on to produce many popular entertaining films, such as Hangover, Independence Day, and 300.

He was drawn to Spirit Series by their mission. "I like that Spirit Series is changing people's lives," Fay said, "It is building the character of its participants inside and outside of school."



(Photo by Denise Meridith) William and Jody Fay were co-hosts of a fundraising event for the organization Spirit Series on February 22, 2024 in Paradise Valley, Arizona.

Spirit Series is the brainchild of Leslie and Richard Strauss. Richard, who is a successful screenwriter, was inspired to create the SpiritSeries part of the program 24 years ago, when he was faced with consoling his 10-year-old daughter after her mother died. He and Leslie have now touched the lives of 60,000+ students by involving them in learning and, actually, performing in what has evolved into a series of six one-act plays (i.e., Ballad of Sitting Bull, Galileo's Crime, Freedom Train, Buddha Walks, Seeking Socrates, and The Conquistador's Wife) for grades 4-7.

"We have documented, positive results," said Richard Strauss. "The Spirit Series has resulted in 31% of the students demonstrating an increase in cognitive skills and 29% in social and emotional skills."

There are other important components of the Strauss' initiatives. SpiritCorps strengthens positive core values and self-discovery through the narrative writing and video storytelling of students in grades 7-12. These days, teachers are as challenged as students. SpiritWorks is also empowering personal leadership and professional development for educators, teams, and classroom teachers.

"We are solving educators' problems, too," said Leslie Strauss, a Professional Coach, who has a distinguished history of experience with museums, art, and education. "Increases in student focus and teamwork, decreases in absenteeism, and enhanced parental support empower classroom teachers."

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The Spirit Series is currently active in the Los Angeles Unified School District as well as schools in Massachusetts, Maine, South Dakota, and Maryland.

According to [Scholaroo.com](https://www.scholaroo.com), Arizona ranks 47th for the least educated, 38th for educational attainment, 48th for

school quality, 49th in lowest graduation rate, and is ranked the worst state for teachers. The Spirit Series hopes to bring fresh ideas to schools that would benefit students, educators and communities in Arizona. Individuals and organizations interested in more information on this



(Photo by Denise Meridith) Leslie Strauss of Spirit Series thanked Karen Castles Gray for hosting the fundraiser on February 22, 2024, at Gray's home in Paradise Valley, Arizona.

initiative can contact the organization via <https://spiritseries.org/contact>.

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(Photo by Denise Meridith) Leslie Rachel and Richard Strauss are going to launch the Spirit Series educational program which involves performing one-act plays about historical heroes in Arizona.

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