

## I champion Albany public schools because...

### **The opportunity:**

"The City School District of Albany works hard to provide dynamic extracurricular activities for its students. I worked as a teacher at Arbor Hill Elementary School from 1977 until 2002. When I retired, I knew I would miss it, but soon realized I could still help kids by developing after-school programs, which is how Park Playhouse Kidz began.

"To me, the best way to learn how to cooperate is to put on a show, that's number one. Then, if you can sing or dance or act, that's a plus. But you need to learn how to read if you want to be in the show because you must be able to read the script. And being part of a production can be a huge motivation to that end."

### **The achievement:**

"The Park Playhouse Kidz program performed *The Wiz* at Hackett Middle School last fall, and then put on a production of *Seussical* at Myers Middle School in January and a Motown review at North Albany Academy in the spring.

"This kind of after-school programming available within Albany public schools keeps students occupied, off the streets and involved in positive activities. For the kids who choose, for whatever reasons, not to play sports, an after-school theater program gives them an opportunity to do something and belong to something."



**Shirley W. Arensberg**  
**Director of Education**  
**Park Playhouse Inc., Albany**

**Shirley W. Arensberg is the director of education for Park Playhouse Inc. A retired City School District of Albany teacher, Ms. Arensberg began her association with Park Playhouse as an actor in its productions of "Kiss Me Kate" (Hattie), "Brigadoon" (Matron McPherson), "Damn Yankees" (Sister) and "Gypsy" (Mazeppa), and also has performed in the Lyrics & Lyricists Series and in various other musical theater productions and charitable events in the area. She has been the administrative director of Park Playhouse II since 1996.**

**Ms. Arensberg was the first recipient of WTEN's Educator of Excellence award in 2000, recipient of the Founder's Day PTA Award in 1994 and 2002, and the JC Penney Golden Rule Award in 1996. She performed and was entertainment chairperson of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation Gala Benefit for five years and the chairperson and founder of the Arbor Hill School Celebrity Readers for 11 years. She is the liaison for the ROAR Literacy Program of the United Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York and the Albany city elementary schools. She has been a board member of Capital Region Sponsor-A-Scholar since 2002.**