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Raue Center reaches 100,000th student

Date: February 17, 2006 **Section:** Community - Other

CRYSTAL LAKE The **Raue Center** for the Arts has served **100,000 students** three years before its goal. Oscars

Now it hopes to serve 250,000 **students** through its Mission Imagination program by 2010.

Raue Center officials were proud as the **100,000th student** filed into the **Raue Center** for "Clifford The Big Red Dog LIVE!" on Feb. 9.

"I knew it was going to happen that morning," **Raue Center** Assistant Director Holly Richard said. "It certainly was a very special event."

Students from more than 120 schools have participated in Mission Imagination, which exposes children to performing arts by bringing them to the **center** or taking the artists to their schools. Showing performing arts to children was a goal of **Raue Center** organizers.

"In those early years, they knew they wanted to be able to introduce **students** to the arts," Richard said. "This is a way to give back to the community."

Several of the acts are sponsored by local businesses, and the **Raue** always needs more organizations that are willing to give, Richard said.

She said the **Raue** had invested its resources in bringing kid-friendly artists to the theater and to the schools.

"No one early on expected we'd be putting on such a high level of programming," she said.

Mission Imagination brought **students** to the **Raue** for 14 programs and took 11 programs to schools in its first year when it opened in

2001. This year, Mission Imagination brought **students** in for 19 programs and took 55 programs to schools. Next year, programs include "Charlotte's Web" and "Seussical The Musical," Richard said.

Bringing the acts to the schools reduces costs for busing **students**.

"It makes it a lot more financially feasible for them," Richard said.

Richard said the program also gave **students** a familiarity with theater that would make them feel comfortable attending shows as adults.

"It's very important to build our new audiences with young people," Richard said.

By KAREN LONG

klong@nwherald.com

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