



Granby Drummer
February 2009

Granby Education Foundation's *Nutcracker* "Sweet"
by Barbara Cashman

One cold weekend in December, the resounding applause in the Granby Memorial High School auditorium was matched only by the nervous giggles, the pounding hearts, and the sighs of relief and exhilaration generated backstage by the 140 Granby children who participated in the CT Ballet production of *The Nutcracker*. Artistic Director Brett Raphael and his team provided the costumes, the sets, and the expertise, but the Granby community clearly provided the heart.



From sleigh-pulling reindeer to battling mice, each group of dancers had their own personal cheering section in the audience. Neighbors, friends and family had supported them through weeks of rehearsals from the middle of soccer season right up until show time. The support ranged from words of encouragement to carpools, from putting eyeliner on five year olds to unloading (and re-loading!) trucks transporting equipment and sets, from wiping nervous backstage tears to providing window space in which to hang advertising. By all accounts, from all volunteers, not only was the production a success, but each person was proud to have played a role. Stage Mom Leigh Caputo recalled: "I had a moment – seeing our kids take their places on stage alongside the Sugarplum Fairy – a moment of pride that as a community we were able to pull this experience together for them. I don't think the kids can recognize it right now, but I certainly understand what we've accomplished. They danced with a professional company, learned from professional dancers. Wow!"

The feedback about the quality of the show was equally positive. Linda Veirs, whose grandson was a cannoneer, said, "I've been to many *Nutcrackers* over the years. I think this one was the best. I am grateful to the Granby Education Foundation for bringing this wonderful production – and wonderful experience – to town."

Each fall, the Granby Education Foundation presents a cultural event in an effort to raise funds for its' Arts Endowment. When proposed by the CT Ballet, this community-based event easily addressed the organization's mission: dance instruction by a professional team provided the educational component, in the broader cultural component of a full ballet production for the greater community. Armed with the warm holiday tradition of The Nutcracker, the GEF was able to secure the sponsorship of four local businesses. Good Works Insurance served as the Presenting ("Nutcracker") Sponsor of the event with its very generous donation. The Hartford served as the "Sugarplum Fairy" sponsor with its first sponsorship of a GEF event. And loyal supporters and neighbors Granby Pharmacy and Northwest Community Bank served as "Snowflake" sponsors. The GEF thanks each of these businesses for sharing in its vision, and for investing in the education of the community.

The GEF board, working with the Friends of the Granby Education Foundation, then expanded the scope of this undertaking to include The Nutcracker Tea, the premium ticket, red-carpet profit generating portion of this project. Surrounded by twinkling lights, ballet slipper trees, and life-sized nutcrackers, patrons enjoyed a sumptuous Holiday Tea and the opportunity to mix with the costumed dancers of the CT Ballet. The GEF thanks Carol and Greg Reid, and Marcy and Tom Green of Dragonfly Events, for the beautiful decorations; and Terri and Greg Cote and the rest of their team for the delicious food. The event truly was something special.



While the contributions of all of the volunteers are too numerous to possibly recognize in the space of one article, the GEF would like to gratefully acknowledge its event chairs, Frania Fairchild, Sandra Fischer, and Rebecca Brewer, who put many, many hours into the success of this event. The GEF also thanks: the staff and administration of the Granby public schools (particularly Darlene Buckland, who acted as site supervisor); the parents of the performers (who played many backstage roles); and the Friends of the GEF, who assisted with everything from selling program ads to baking cookies for the concession stand. Said Sandra Fischer, GEF Nutcracker Committee Co-Chair, "Nothing short of a town like Granby could have made this such a success for our kids and the GEF Arts Endowment!"