

The Elephant Man Production Inspires UHS Drama Students To Develop U MATTER: A Youth Empowerment Organization

UHS Drama students will present The Elephant Man November 2 and 3 with an interactive session to follow sharing about their student-led organization, U MATTER, focusing on inclusion, kindness and anti-bullying

URBANDALE, Iowa – October 22, 2018 – As Urbandale High School (UHS) Drama students began participating in the fall production of The Elephant Man, they became aware that the play was about more than memorizing lines, more than costume changes and more than set designs; the play sparked a profound desire in them to transcend pain and suffering through courage, kindness and inclusion. The new UHS student-led organization, “U MATTER,” focuses on raising awareness about inclusion, kindness and anti-bullying in order to make a difference for young people who may feel marginalized. U MATTER has formed a partnership with Urbandale Middle School in an effort to bring hope to sixth through eighth grade students knowing that these years are often fraught with the challenges of fitting in and finding oneself.

“The message of the show inspired myself and the students of UHS Drama to start U MATTER, a youth empowerment initiative bringing messages of anti-bullying, inclusion and kindness to Urbandale Middle School,” said UHS student Matt Moran. “Our drama department is eager to help our school district in any way we can and we hope that U MATTER will be a long-lasting and meaningful partnership that helps Urbandale CSD students now and for years to come.”

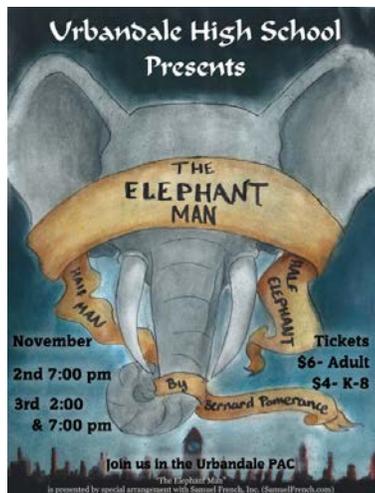


U MATTER logo designed by UHS student Laura Parsons.

The Elephant Man production has performances at 7:00 p.m. on November 2, 2018, and at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. on November 3, 2018. Tickets may be purchased one hour prior to the start of the performance outside the UHS Performing Arts Center (\$6 – Adults; \$4 – kindergarten through eighth grade). Following the show, the ensemble will host an Interactive Talk Back Session where audience members will be able to interact with the cast and crew in order to discuss the underlying themes of the show and learn more about U MATTER.

The Elephant Man is a powerful Tony-Award winning story of hope set in London at the end of the 19th century. The play is based on the life of John Merrick, a man intensely disfigured by rare skin and bone conditions. These medical issues make him seen as a freak by society and he soon becomes the star

freak attraction in traveling sideshows. Found abandoned and helpless, he is admitted to London's Whitechapel Hospital. There, he is cared for by a kind young physician, Dr. Frederick Treves. As time passes, he is introduced to London society and slowly evolves from an object of pity to a symbol of hope. Alongside Dr. Treves, he continues to try to fit into society and achieve his ultimate dream—to become a man like any other.



The Elephant Man poster designed by UHS student Karina Zepeda.

The Urbandale Community School District is immensely proud of the compassion, empathy and leadership of the UHS Drama Department. U MATTER is a critically important organization dedicated to supporting the ideals and values for which the district firmly believes which include kindness, trust, empathy, inclusion and belonging. The production of The Elephant Man, followed by the Interactive Talk Back Session with the ensemble, is sure to be a powerful experience and one the district commends these students for pursuing, developing and leading.

About Urbandale Community School District

The Urbandale Community School District includes portions of Des Moines and Urbandale, Iowa. The District serves over 3,900 students in six elementary schools, one middle school and one comprehensive high school. The Urbandale District supports an increasingly diverse student population where 47 languages are spoken. Building on the existing foundation of excellence in education, Urbandale is transforming education throughout the District. By implementing innovative [Quality/Continual Improvement](#) strategies that create learning environments that more fully engage, challenge and motivate students, Urbandale is taking transformation from theory into practice. Urbandale prepares students for becoming lifelong learners and is a school district that brings learning to life for everyone. To learn more, visit: UrbandaleSchools.com and follow on Twitter [@UrbandaleCSD](https://twitter.com/UrbandaleCSD).

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