

Billie SUE HOOD THOMPSON

Class of 1961

Billie Sue Hood Thompson is a theater guru and an award-winning educator who helped pave the way to Broadway for a number of her Broken Arrow High School students.

According to the nomination letter submitted by Jo Ellen Clow, our Great Graduate from the class of 1961 returned to her alma mater to share her gift of motivating young people in theater arts.

“Many of her performances were of college level quality, motivating students to move forward in their professional careers,” Clow said.

One of these youngsters was a little girl with a big voice ~ Tony Award winner Kristin Chenoweth.

Another of Thompson’s kids currently making it big on Broadway is Michael Patrick Gaffney.

“Every time I am working on a show, I think about what she taught me,” he said. “I hear her voice saying ‘the actor has three tools: the voice, the body and the imagination.’ Today, I have an award-winning show, and one of

the characters I play is Billie Sue.”

Following her retirement from Broken Arrow High School, Thompson continued to direct highly acclaimed productions that included children, youths and adults. She organized and ran several theater camps and still accepts a few roles in theaters around the greater Tulsa Area.

She was involved with Tulsa Arts and Humanities Council programming, including Artists in Schools, Artists in Residence and Summer Arts. She has also worked with the Museum Broken Arrow in portraying historical females of the community.

Cementing her theater guru status, in 2011, Thompson was named the first recipient of the Mary Kay Place Legacy Award. It was named for Tulsa native Mary Kay Place to honor “an individual who has advanced the standard of theatrical excellent in the Tulsa community through creative contribution, artistic vision, exemplary service and outstanding leadership.”

