



# Taking CENTER

**W**hen the lights dim and the first note rings out across the Performing Arts Center (PAC), the audience quiets, leans forward and just like that, the Village feels a little smaller, a little warmer, a little more connected.

For decades, this stage has been home to laughter, music, comedy, drama, applause and moments that bring residents together. Some come for the concerts, others for the lectures or musicals, but everyone leaves with the same feeling: joy in sharing something live and local.

## **A STAGE THAT NEVER SLEEPS**

The PAC hosted about 45 shows in 2024—and that's not even counting free movies, lectures and town hall meetings—and welcomed nearly 22,000 patrons through its doors. Attendance can swing from a cozy half-full house to a packed crowd,





# STAGE

The Performing Arts Center is the heart of Village entertainment.

*By Ellyce Rothrock*

depending on the event. But even on quieter nights, the energy is unmistakable.

"We're seeing younger audiences as new residents move in, but we still have patrons in their 90s who never miss a show," said Renee Anderson, coordinator for the

PAC. "It's this mix that keeps the atmosphere vibrant."

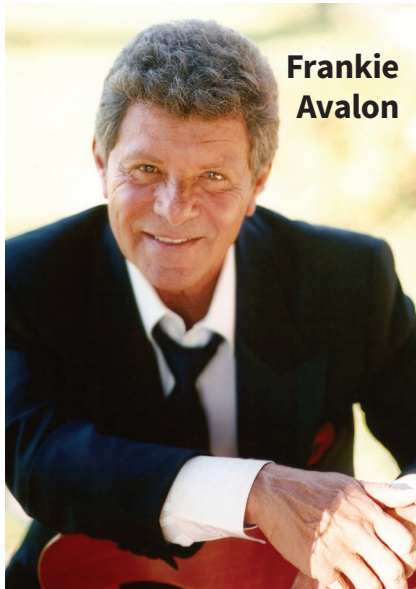
#### **FROM LEGENDS TO LECTURES**

Tribute bands continue to be the Village's biggest crowd-pleasers, but recent surprises have proven that residents are open to more than nostalgia. The

#### **BACKSTAGE FUN FACT**

The very first PAC show featured 200 resident performers in a variety spectacular of music and comedy.

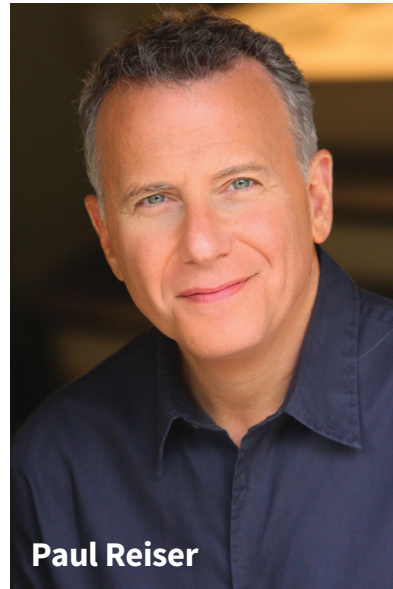




**Frankie Avalon**



**Micky Dolenz**



**Paul Reiser**



**Tony Orlando**

wildly popular Timeless Melodies lectures, for example, once drew such a long line that the box office had to hold the show for half an hour.

“We didn’t expect that kind of turnout. It was wonderful,” Anderson said.

And while the PAC doesn’t host outside professional tours in the traditional sense, a few big names have crossed its stage, including Tony Orlando, Mickey Dolenz of The Monkees, Paul Reiser, Pat Boone, Frankie Avalon

and even Charo.

“Every one of them was lovely in person and thrilled by our audience,” Anderson said.

#### **THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE MAGIC**

Running a show at the PAC is no small feat. A typical performance requires five or six technicians, two office staff, a box office attendant, up to 10 volunteer ushers and one or two bartenders if there’s a GRF no-host bar. For sold-out events, nearly 20 people are behind the scenes making sure everything runs smoothly.

But one of the biggest challenges, the team admits, isn’t backstage at all; it’s making sure residents know what’s happening.

“I meet residents every week who’ve never set foot in the PAC,” Anderson said. “And after they come, they always ask, ‘Why wasn’t it full? That was amazing!’”

Keeping ticket prices reasonable while offering top-quality entertainment takes creativity and intuition.

“We look for acts that feel right for this community—fun, cross-generational and never controversial,” Anderson said. “We’re here to entertain first and foremost.”

#### **A LEGACY OF PERFORMANCE**

The PAC’s story began with a show as ambitious as it was heartwarming, a resident-performed variety extravaganza featuring 200 cast members. Since then, it has evolved from community-run productions to

### **PAC BY THE NUMBERS**

- 55 ticketed events in 2025 (excluding free cultural events and movies)
- 28,000+ prospective patrons in 2026
- 65% average attendance rate
- 20 staff and volunteers needed for a sold-out show



**Vicki Lawrence**



## COMING ATTRACTIONS

- January 24: Vicki Lawrence and “Mama” of The Carol Burnett Show fame
- April: Frank and Barbra: The Concert That Never Was
- June: Late Night Catechism
- August: Magic of Cassandra and Ben

professional acts and themed events, while keeping its homegrown spirit intact.

Some traditions have stood the test of time. Each year, the All-American Boys Chorus fills the hall during the Memorial Day ceremony and concert, a moving event that honors veterans and their stories. Every November, the Korean American Association transforms the auditorium into a sea of color and music during the Arirang Festival.

And then there are the moments that make PAC memories unique.

“At almost every Memorial Day concert, one of the boys from the chorus nearly faints on stage,” Anderson said. “They’re always fine, but it’s become an odd little tradition!”

### MORE THAN ENTERTAINMENT

The PAC is more than a stage. It’s a meeting place, a memory-maker and a hub of community connection. Free movie days and nights offer residents a way to enjoy films on the big screen

without leaving the gates, while events like One Song, presented by the Community Bridge Builders, bring cultures and generations together through music and storytelling.

like LED lighting and possible live streaming to bring shows to even more residents.

As for what’s next on stage? Expect more variety and more creativity.

“I meet residents every week who’ve never stepped foot in the PAC. Once they do, they always come back.”— *Renee Anderson, Performing Arts Center Coordinator*

Local clubs also find success under the PAC’s lights. The Chicago Club, for instance, uses proceeds from its performances to support its monthly gatherings at Clubhouse 5.

“That’s what the PAC is all about, helping residents create experiences for each other,” Anderson said.

### LOOKING TOWARD THE NEXT ACT

With a new sound system installed last year, the PAC has never sounded better. Staff are exploring additional upgrades

“We’re looking to bring in more theatrical productions, such as a ballet, maybe even a fully staged Broadway-style musical,” Anderson said. “We want residents to see something they haven’t seen before.”

And the vision doesn’t stop there.

“Our goal is to keep evolving with the community,” Anderson said. “As new generations move in, we’ll keep mixing beloved traditions with fresh talent. The PAC should always feel like a place where everyone belongs.”