

Third Degree With...
**ROSIE
 O'DONNELL**

A GOOD TURN
 O'Donnell will host
*Passing It On: An
 Evening of Mentorship*
 May 22 at the Alvin
 Ailey Citigroup
 Theater (tickets \$150,
 405 W. 55th St.,
 rosiestheaterkids.org).



The comedian and television host is known for her outspoken personality, but she has an altruistic side as well. In 2003, O'Donnell co-founded **Rosie's Theater Kids**, a nonprofit that helps underprivileged NYC students receive free performing arts instruction, life skills development and academic tutoring, as well as a 15-week in-school program designed to introduce them to musical theater. Later this month, O'Donnell will host **Passing It On: An Evening of Mentorship**, which pairs students with Broadway stars to learn and perform a show in tandem. We asked the avid theater fan about the Great White Way, Donald Trump and rolling with the punches. —Sahar Khan

Why did you choose to have RTKids learn about musical theater?

Because that was always my first love. One of the first schools we went to was right in the middle of the Theater District, and the kids had never seen a Broadway show. I felt it was really unfair, like living in Hawaii and never getting to go to the beach. You live amid the theater world, yet you are denied entrance because of the cost and your social standing? That was the reason.

What are you really good at?

Crafting. I do everything from Play-Doh to knickknack shelves and spin art. I have a whole craft room in my house. It's like a big-kids' toy room. There isn't a craft I haven't tried.

What profession would you never try?

Figure skater. Seems impossible on every level.

Worst job ever?

I started doing stand-up when I was 18. I never really had a regular job.

What always surprises you about New Yorkers?

Their bluntness, which is both charming and terrifying.

What are you afraid of?

Fear.

Favorite Broadway show of all time?

« *Hamilton. I've seen it 15 times. I love it so much, it's like going to church for me. If there was a way to go every single week I would. I usually get the tickets through Charitybuzz, so I pay for a good cause.* »

Most memorable honor to date?

Nickelodeon's Kids' Choice Awards. Voted on by the children of America. If a kid doesn't like you, they let you know, and if a kid does like you, they're not bullshitting. Their social-appropriate comment meters haven't been installed yet, and if you're voted by the kids of America as their favorite anything, that's a big, big honor.

What is your motto?

[Starts singing "Tubthumping" by Chumbawamba]
 'I get knocked down, but I get up again, no you're never gonna keep me down.'

When are you at your happiest?

Around my kids. Or for a trifecta of happiness, with my kids, at a musical, preferably *Hamilton*.

What have you learned from working with the kids who are part of RTKids?

That at the end of the day, love is all that matters—it really is. It's the reason we're alive: to love each other and to learn to help each other. And that compassion, creativity and kindness are essential in the world.

Complete this sentence: "If Donald Trump becomes president, I will..."

Here's my sentence, in capital letters: HE WILL NEVER BE PRESIDENT!

PHOTO BY CHAD BATKA