



Jo and Victor Izay, 73 and 84, have combined their passion for theater with their commitment to education.

They've also helped organize and promote conventions, including the Gathering of Nations Pow Wow and the Mariachi Spectacular. Victor, a veteran of state, film and television for more than 60 years, began his Albuquerque stage career in 1948. He also taught drama at St. Mary's High School and served as Master of Ceremonies for Albuquerque's 250th anniversary.

When they married, Jo and Victor formed the Podium Players and began writing and producing plays about historical figures. Bound for Canaan, a play Victor wrote about

runaway-slave-turned-abolitionist Frederick Douglass, toured the university circuit. Its success led the couple to write, produce and direct more historical plays and use them as teaching tools. Their History Live has since reached schools and churches throughout New Mexico free of charge. They have continued to bring their historical plays to rural New Mexico, even long after running out of grant money. The Izays raised \$10,000 for Rio Rancho High School Performance Art Center. "I don't look at theater or volunteering as work, it's just something that has to be done," Jo says. Theater, she adds, can be more effective than traditional teaching methods because it engages the audience: "You dress an actor in all his glory and, honey, the kids pay attention."

Victor's specialty is coaching budding actors and even calming them before performances. Jo prefers writing; she penned her first play, *Patricio, El Penitente*, in 1986. They stay active with several local organizations, including Goodwill Industries, KNME-TV and El Paisano, a Spanish-speaking International Toastmaster Club in Albuquerque.