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California State East Bay students and others who are interested may find out if gentlemen really do prefer blondes Oct. 8 and 9, when Carol Channing, the original Miss Lorelei Lee, visits the university to perform and advise theatrical students.

Channing, a Tony Award winner for her role as Dolly in the long-running Broadway musical production of “Hello, Dolly,” will visit the Hayward campus as part of her support of arts education in California.

Channing will be at the center of two fundraising events in support of scholarships for students of the university’s Theatre and Dance Department during both days she is on campus.

On Oct. 8 she will be honored at a supporter’s dinner on Oct. 8 at 6 p.m. in the New University Union.

The following evening, Channing will perform in the University Theatre at 7 p.m.

The goal is to raise $25,000 for a scholarship fund that will be named in Channing’s honor. Her arts education foundation will be donating $10,000 to be used for scholarships at CSUEB.

“Still we have to remember more than these scholarships,” said Tom Hird, chair of CSUEB’s Department of Theatre and Dance, in an announcement of Channing’s visit on the university’s website. “Channing wants to raise awareness of the value of a good educational foundation in the arts.”

Channing was born Jan. 31, 1921 in Seattle, Washington, but was raised in San Francisco, according to her website. She was a dance and drama major and made her Broadway debut in 1946.

Since then, she has performed in dozens of plays and films and made countless appearances on television programs. Her credits include appearances in “Pygmalion,” “Wonderful Town,” “Gentlemen Prefer Blondes” (as Lorelei Lee) and “Hello, Dolly!”

She won her first Tony award for her performance as matchmaker Dolly Levi in “Hello, Dolly!” and received another Tony in 1996 for her lifetime achievement in the theater. In 2003, Channing received the Julie Harris Lifetime Achievement Award from the Actors’ Fund of America.

Channing’s visit comes to support the Arts in Support of California Public Schools (Arts in Support), a nonprofit whose mission is to promote arts education at all levels and grades.

Channing also is performing at, and meeting with students of, other campuses in the California State University system as part of the couple’s efforts to support arts education in the state.

“Arts in education enhance the abilities of learning from a very early age,” Channing said in the CSUEB website announcement. “It provides a sensitive relationship for our youth regardless of the form of art, with reading, writing, communication, observing and creativity being ignited.”

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