

Fantasy characters make real pitch for Fund for Arts

Leaders hope drive will raise \$5.6 million

By ANDREW ADLER
The Courier-Journal

Most people think of the Fund for the Arts in terms of money. But Robert Harris regards it as a welcome boon to his social life.

"I'm a single guy," said Harris, who regularly attends Actors Theatre of Louisville, which he calls "a great place to take a date."

Harris was in the lobby of the Kentucky Center for the Arts yesterday for the kickoff of the public part of the fund's 1998 campaign, which wants to raise \$5.6 million for 18 arts groups and programs in the Louisville area.

He was surrounded by colleagues from Healthcare Recoveries Inc., one of many businesses that encourage their employees to volunteer time and money.

They and other volunteers were treated to entertainment and fast food, interspersed with speeches.

Accompanied by a powerful boom and a puff of smoke, characters from "The Wizard of Oz" entered the lobby.

They were led by Derrick Jones of WAVE-TV, who was extravagantly costumed as the wizard. This year's campaign slogan, "There's no place like home," also alludes to ATL's hit production of the musical in September.

*"I'd be friends with all supporters,
And I'd sing an encore,
If you'd just support the arts,"*

the Cowardly Lion, Paul Kerr of Music Theatre Louisville, crooned to the tune of "If I Only Had a Brain." He was accompanied by Gayle King and her trio.

"Thank you, Dorothy and all-powerful wizard," said James R. Gaunt, who is chairman of the 1998 campaign and chief executive of Fifth Third Bank of Kentucky.

Campaign volunteers lunched on fried chicken, pizza and bean burritos donated by Tricon Global Restaurants Inc. Tricon will double whatever its employees raise in this year's campaign.

Allan Cowen, president of the Fund for the Arts, hopes the corporate match will be "around \$100,000."

Beth Blouin of National City Bank was in the lobby listening to about 200 members of the Louisville Youth Choir singing "Some-



PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHUHMAN, THE COURIER-JOURNAL

WAVE-TV newscaster Derrick Jones, decked out as the Wizard of Oz, helped kick off the Fund for the Arts' 1998 public campaign yesterday at the Kentucky Center for the Arts.

where Over the Rainbow." She has a longtime interest in the arts.

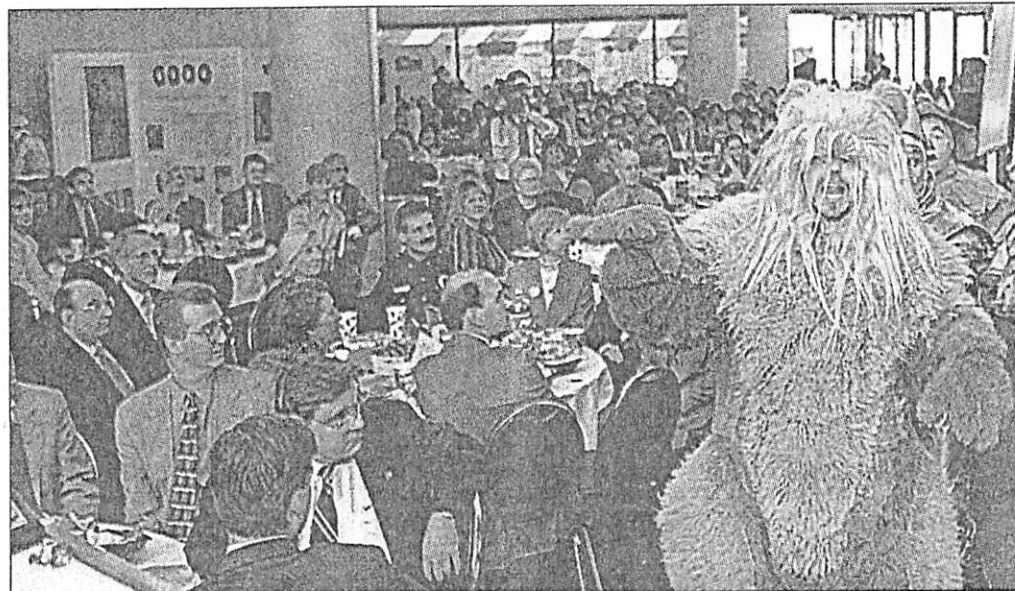
"I was a performing artist and musical director for the Blue Apple Players," a children's theater group, said Blouin, the bank's community-relations director.

"Now that I've gone over to the business side, I probably have more of an opportunity to contribute money, where before I contributed my talent."

The youth choir gets financial support from the fund.

"We would not exist were it not for the fund," said the choir's executive music director, Frank Heller III. "They've helped us spread the word, with concerts and recommending us to people."

"It's not just the money; it's the constant care they give — the nurturing."



The Cowardly Lion (Paul Kerr) was followed closely by the Tin Man and the Scarecrow as they entertained the crowd. Later, about 200 members of the Louisville Youth Choir sang.