

# The Magic of New York City



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## Experience the warmth and energy within New York City's famous theatre district.

When BKD Technologies' Holly Armitage isn't assisting with software implementation projects, she's probably planning a trip to New York to catch whatever shows are on Broadway. With ties to theatre that date back to reluctantly joining her high school drama club, Holly has found a welcoming and inspiring atmosphere within various theatre communities.

"I love working with and being surrounded by people who have different backgrounds and perspectives than my own. Theatre communities have always welcomed me, and I've made lifelong friends through these experiences," says Holly.



Holly (right) with friends Yanin and Britt before seeing "Miss Saigon" on Broadway.

### Appreciating different perspectives

All Broadway performances were suspended on March 12, 2020, in response to COVID-19. During lockdown, Holly and her husband Albert watched various online performances where Broadway actors performed out of their apartments. When the lights came back on this September, they attended the reopening night of "Chicago" and "Moulin Rouge," and every time a principal cast member made their entrance, they were greeted with lengthy applause. After the first downbeat of the opening song in "Moulin Rouge," the audience erupted with screams, clapping and cheering louder and longer than the other five times she'd seen the show.

"Before the shutdown, I would have said my first Broadway show, 'Les Misérables,' was my favorite. Now, I'd have to say it was reopening night of 'Moulin Rouge' and experiencing that exchange of energy between audience and cast," says Holly.

After seeing her first show in 2007, she knew she'd experienced something really special and always wanted to get back to that. She continued the trek from the Kansas City metro each year until 2014, seeing shows like "After Midnight," "Big Fish," "If/Then," and "Wicked."

"It's important to keep the theatre alive to give people that other perspective. You might see a show that strikes a chord with you about something you hadn't thought about before, or see a situation acted out that you've never been in personally that opens your eyes to other peoples' circumstances," she says.



The set of "Moulin Rouge" on the September 2021 Reopening Night.

### Lifelong friends and the journey to BKD

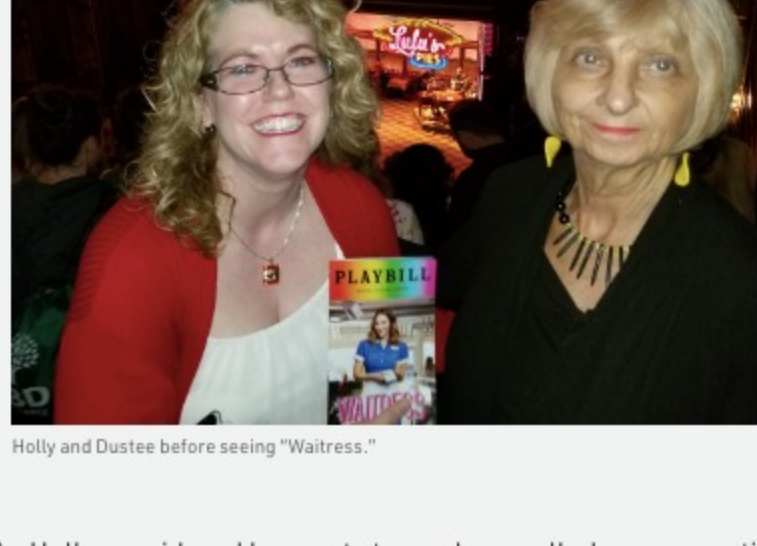
Near the end of 2014, Holly considered moving to New York, but given she'd never been so far from friends and family, wanted to be sure she could handle the transition. She decided to spend one week in the city—where she met and became mutual Instagram friends with Broadway actor James Snyder after a performance at Feinstein's/54 Below and played softball with Aaron Tveit at Yankee Stadium.

"I paid \$250 to be the bat girl on a charity softball team with Aaron Tveit. All the actors were so kind and approachable," she says. "I told one of the guys I was curious about moving here and he answered all of my questions." She even asked about places to volunteer and give back.

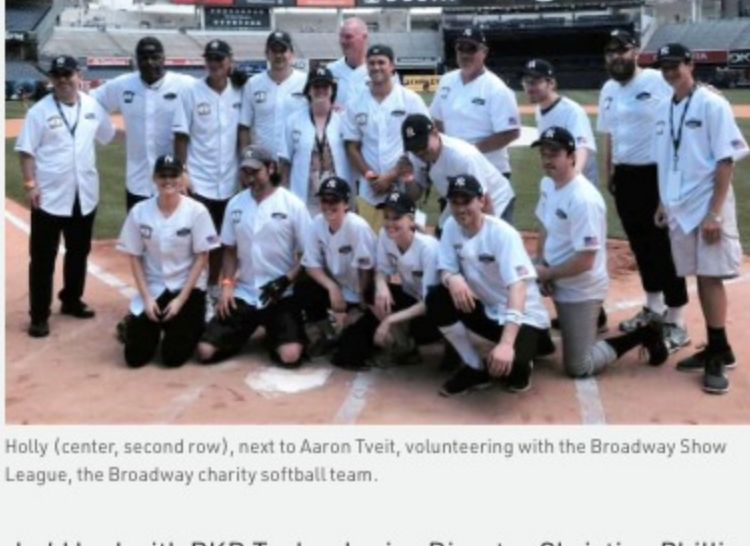
"One of the gentlemen asked what I was doing tomorrow because they were serving at a soup kitchen. He offered me his 'Broadway Serves' t-shirt, and the next day we served food for the homeless."

After 13 years in a controller position with John Knox Village, Holly re-evaluated her needs and moved to the Bronx for nine months, where she assumed a bookkeeping position for a nanny agency. She watched plenty of shows while living in the area, including "The River," "Miss Saigon," "Chicago," "The King and I," and "Phantom of the Opera," and made wonderful friends, including Jim and Dustee, an older couple who attended the same church and who essentially became Holly's New York parents. "They gave me a sense of home since I didn't know anyone before moving halfway across the country," she says.

Holly helped the couple move from the Bronx to Manhattan and paint their new apartment. After she moved back to the Kansas City area, she still went to visit New York at least three times a year—and every time she'd stay with Jim and Dustee. To thank them for their hospitality, she took Dustee to see "Hamilton," making her the envy of all her friends.



Holly and Dustee before seeing "Waitress."



Holly (center, second row), next to Aaron Tveit, volunteering with the Broadway Show League, the Broadway charity softball team.

As Holly considered her next steps, she recalled a conversation she'd had with BKD Technologies Director Christina Phillips.

"John Knox Village was a client of BKD, and we'd reach out to Christina for assistance on Dynamics GP. I was so impressed with her ability to answer off the top of her head the paths to take in the software to get something done," she says. Holly reconnected with Christina, saw an opening with BKD, and joined the team.

"Holly brings such an enthusiasm to her work and deeply cares about our clients' success in their software projects," says Christina. "She can work with a wide range of personalities and support and encourage them in all the right ways."

When it comes to the level of planning, configuration, and practicing before the go-live date, a Dynamics GP or Dynamics 365 Business Central implementation is a bit like a theatre production.

"One thing that drew me to theatre was its accumulation of people from diverse social groups. You have people who are great with their hands who build the sets, people who understand sound production, talented musicians, and so on. Everyone comes together to put on a spectacular show," says Holly. "On the BKD Technologies team, we all bring unique gifts to the table, and they all fit together to serve our clients so well that a recent chief financial officer said their implementation was fun. The recipients of reports from the new system might not applaud like an audience, but there's excitement at the completion of a project well done."

### A carriage ride through Central Park

In January 2020, Holly took Albert to see his first Broadway show, but Albert had a few other plans in mind. He arranged a carriage ride through Central Park, after seeing "Moulin Rouge," complete with a dozen roses and a videographer and photographer following the carriage to capture his proposal on the Gapstow Tavern, overlooking Wollman Rink, Holly's favorite site in the park. The carriage dropped the newly engaged couple at Tavern on the Green for dinner. For everyone's safety, their wedding in April of 2020 was an intimate 10-person gathering, but when the couple attended Broadway's reopening in September, they also had their wedding reception, hosted by Jim and Dustee, where they were finally able to celebrate with friends in person.



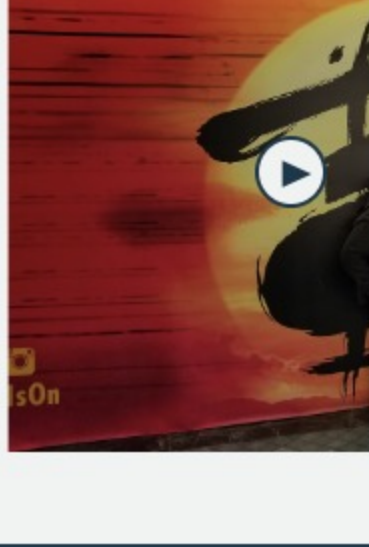
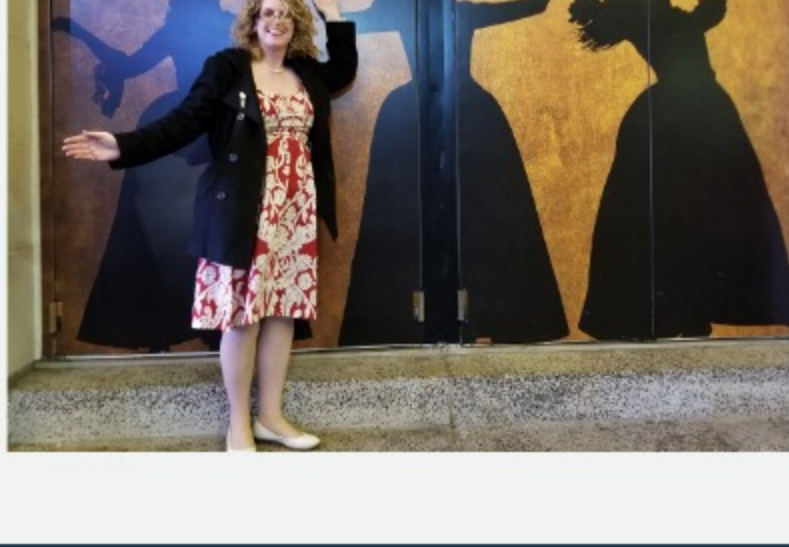
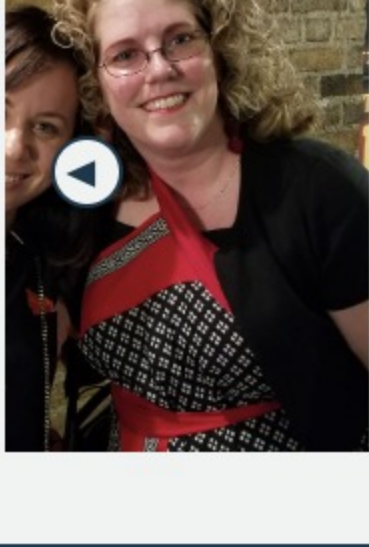
Holly and Albert on their engagement night.

Although the proposal was a one-time event, there are plenty of other must-sees and dos when they visit the area, like enjoying cheesecake at Junior's Restaurant & Bakery after a Broadway show. Holly also recommends grabbing a drink at Laughing Man Coffee and taking a walk on the High Line, an elevated freight rail line transformed into a public park and walking trail with art installations.

"My friends and the excitement in the air of the theatre district energize me and blow away any gloomy clouds hanging over me," says Holly. "If I ever need something to look forward to, I plan a visit to New York City."

### Holly's Facts & Favorites

- ▼ In high school, Holly helped build sets and assisted with sound, props, and costumes. Her one on-stage role was a part in the chorus of "Little Shop of Horrors." She became stage manager her senior year and put on the musical, "The Wiz."
- ▼ Her favorite performer is Aaron Tveit, whose voice has been compared to that of 1,000 angels. She befriended three Aaron Tveit fans at a concert in 2018, and while they're all from diverse backgrounds, that's secondary to their love of sharing the experience of live theatre.
- ▼ She loves New York at Christmas, looking at every Macy's window and the booths at Bryant Park's Winter Village. She also recommends strolling down 5th Avenue to see how the buildings are decorated. (One of her favorites is the big red bow on the Cartier building.)
- ▼ Her favorite productions are "Hamilton" and "Moulin Rouge." The directing, writing, costumes, sets, and music of both work together perfectly to communicate the message. Although Aaron Tveit stars in "Moulin Rouge," she'd have to say the historical weight and significance of "Hamilton" just outshines the jukebox musical of "Moulin Rouge."
- ▼ The one production she hasn't seen but wants to see is "The Music Man," starring Hugh Jackman. She and Albert had tickets to see it on their engagement trip, but the show was postponed during the lockdown. They'll finally get to see it in late December!



## Share Your Story

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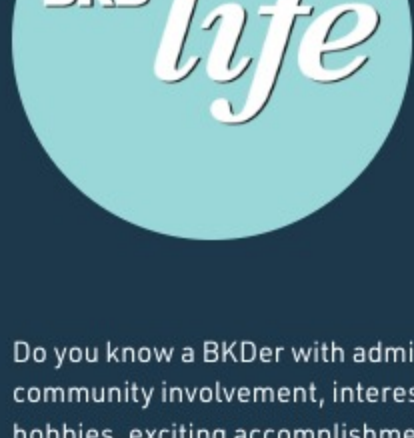
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