



# Applause!

Fall 2008

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*The Mission of the Flat River Community Players is to produce quality theatre.*

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As Christmastime approaches, you'll want to make plans to see the comedy that the Flat River

Community Players are producing for the holidays. Think 1940, in a typical town in the Midwest, and nine-year-old Ralph Parker

wants only one thing for Christmas - an official Red Ryder carbine-action 200-shot range model BB gun with a compass in the stock. Sound familiar? It should.

"A Christmas Story," adapted for the stage by Philip Grecian, from the original motion picture classic of the same title, is based on the short stories and anecdotes of humorist Jean Shepherd, an amazing storyteller and outspoken radio host, and includes material from his books **In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash** and **Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories**. The play adaptation debuted in 2000, sadly, just a year after Shepherd's death.

Whimsical and more than a tad sarcastic, "A Christmas Story," both the movie and now the stage play, has become a classic tribute to the all-American, nostalgic view of Christmastime. Young Ralphie dreams of his ideal gift for Christmas and wages an all-out campaign to convince his parents. He pleads his case before his mother, his teacher, and even Santa Claus himself, at Goldblatt's Department Store, but the response is always the same, "You'll shoot your eye out!"

Ralphie also suffers through all kinds of childhood dilemmas, from his brother's snowsuit paralysis to the yellow-eyed Scut Farkas affair to the dreaded tongue-on-a-frozen-flagpole stunt. Of course, the Old Man is a big part of the story, as well, dealing with the family's temperamental furnace, the ravaging Bumpus hounds, and the tire-changing incident that leads to foul-tasting Lifebuoy soap for Ralphie. And, let us not forget the infamous leg lamp. All your favorite Parker family shenanigans are part of the fun.

Steve King is directing "A Christmas Story" for the Players. He's cast young Harrison Witt as Ralphie, with Lyle B. Fales playing the grown-up Ralph, who narrates the action. Kim Joki is the Old Man, and Jill Warren plays Mother. Ralphie's little brother, Randy, who hasn't eaten voluntarily in three years, is played by Evan Diehl.

Skye Hayes appears as the bully, Scut Farkas, with Brekken Hayes as the toadie. Ralphie's buddies, Flick and Schwartz, are Vincent Frank and Abner Snyder, respectively. Gabrielle King appears as Esther Jane, a girl smitten with the oblivious Ralphie, and Alicia Gatchel is Helen Weathers, another girl in the class. Hannah Fales plays Miss Shields, Ralphie's teacher.

Others in Ralphie's class are played by Hayley Diehl, Kaitlyn Denevan, Drew Gatchel, Megan Cruz, and Westley King. Carl Gatchel and Jessica Gilbertson appear as townspeople.

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## The President's Message!

The Flat River Community Players have just hired their first year-round employee. Sally Breidinger will be primarily focusing on fundraising and grant writing, and will be working with the Fundraising and Public Relations Committees. She is retired from Huntington Bank in Stanton, where she worked for a number of years as Office manager. Her educational background is in Accounting and Business Management and she has experience in marketing as well. Most importantly, Sally has a lot of experience in fund raising, having worked in this capacity for Stanton Rotary, Montcalm Cancer Society Fund, Turk Lake United Methodist Church, St. Dominic's Catholic Church and the Greenville Women's Action Network. We are pleased and proud to have Sally working for us, and wish her well in her new position.

Please take the opportunity to introduce yourself to Sally at the Annual Meeting on Saturday, January 17, 2009. Location and details will be announced soon. The Membership Committee is hard at work getting this event together. If you would like to volunteer to help out, please contact Hilda Sorvari at 794-3697.

We are also pleased to announce the 2009 Flat River Community Players season offerings. In March, just in time for Reading Month, we will present *Seussical*, a musical celebration of the works of Dr. Seuss, directed by Deb Dieckman. Also in the Spring, Karin Wahlfelt will be directing the intriguing and thought-provoking comedy, *Art*. Our Summer offering is expected to be the toe-tapping, rollicking rock and roll musical, *Bye, Bye Birdie*, with a plethora of favorite hit tunes, from "Got a Lotta Livin'" to "Kids!" to "Put On a Happy Face"; look for an official announcement about the director soon. Rounding out the season will be our Fall drama, *The Laramie Project*, directed by Carolyn Johnson, which examines the aftermath of the kidnapping and brutal murder of Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming, in 1998.

Finally, I am sad to report that we have lost two of our hard-working board members. Whitney Stek, liaison to the Membership Committee, had to step down due to family obligations, and Kelly Draper, liaison to the

Continued on page 3



## "Seussical": Finally, theatre for children!

Auditions are coming up later this month for the FRCP production of "Seussical," the Theatre for Young Audiences version, by Lynn Ahrens and Michael Flaherty.

The musical mixes two of Dr. Seuss's most beloved stories, *Horton Hears a Who* and *Horton Hatches the Egg*, throws in a number of characters from other Seuss books (i.e. the Cat in the Hat, Yertle the Turtle, the Grinch, and others), and blends it together with some truly terrific music to create a most delightful Seussian event - bright and colorful, funny yet touching - a tale for children of all ages, families, teens, adults, and all lovers of good theatre.

### Important Audition Details:

- **When:** Thursday & Friday, Nov. 20 & 21, at 7:00 PM  
Saturday, Nov. 22, at 1:00 PM
- **Where:** St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Greenville
- **Cast:** 4-6 men & 6-8 women, adults of varying ages; at least one child, 8 to 12 years or so; and a mixed chorus of all ages (6-12 more, or so)
- **Prep:** Please bring sheet music for a prepared solo, preferably from a Broadway show. It's important that we hear you sing to an accompaniment.
- **Performances:** March 6, 7, 8, 11\*\*, 12, 13, 14  
\*\*This is three daytime performances for area second graders. Anyone cast will be expected to take March 11 off school or work. These three shows are already SOLD OUT!  
NOTE: An additional matinee is possible on either March 7 or 14 (or both), depending on sales.
- **Producer/Director:** Deb Dieckman.
- **Music Director:** Val VanderMark.
- **Rehearsals:** This is the 80-minute long version for kid audiences, so . . .  
Dec. 2 - Cast meeting to distribute scripts, music & CD's; measure for costumes; paperwork; etc.  
Jan. 5-9 - Music rehearsals  
After that - 2 to 3 nights a week until final week  
Possibly a Saturday afternoon or two for big numbers or trouble spots
- **Additional Production Staff:** Kelly Lucas, costumer; Lila King, stage manager; Steve King, set construction; Raven Hahler, set illustration; Tim Schmidt, Tech Director (?)

Questions? Email Deb at [dieckman@charter.net](mailto:dieckman@charter.net) or call her at (616) 754-3687.





## In the Spotlight



**THE RUMOR IS TRUE!** Yup, I got it straight from the bridegroom himself: Bob Lindeman has gotten himself hitched! He and Christine eloped to Marquette over the October 17th weekend. I'm excited to meet the new Mrs. Bob one of these days, as I'm sure many of you are, and wish them all the best in their exciting new life together. Hip Hip Hooray! Way to go, Bob!



**CORRECTION:** Another brain fart and/or senior moment as the newsletter editor. In the summer newsletter, I listed "The Fantasticks" as the summer show in 2003. Wrong. We did that musical in 2003, but it was fall, not summer. The summer show was actually "Grease," so I include its details in this, the fall newsletter since I messed up in July. Good grief! Anyone want this job???



**NEW JOB** - I am excited and tickled to report that my school district, Central Montcalm, has hired our very own Shannon Powell to teach 7th grade English language arts in the Middle School. She's also directing there, both the high school and middle school plays. Bravo to Shannon and to CM for making such a smart move!



**I HATE SHAKESPEARE** - The MCC Drama Class presents an hilarious romp through Shakespeare's classics on Sunday, November 16, in the Barn Theater at 2:00 and 4:00 PM. The show is both funny and educational, and appropriate for middle school-aged students and older. And, it's FREE!



**SAD NEWS** - The Players offer condolences to the friends, family, colleagues, students, and former students of Belding High School English teacher and drama director, David Turrill, who lost his hard-fought battle with cancer recently. Our own Steve King, director of "A Christmas Story," got his start in theater with Mr. Turrill, and gained his love and passion for it from this mentor in his life. For these reasons, Steve dedicates the FRCP production of "A Christmas Story" to Dave Turrill's memory. May he rest peacefully.

## "A Christmas Story" - Cont. from page 1

Working with Steve on the production are Lila King as producer and Jessica Gilberton as costumer. Whitney Stek serves as stage manager, while Hilda Sorvari takes the job of house manager. Lights are by Karin Wahlfeldt, sound by Bob Lindeman, and the backstage crew will be Tim Spohn and Chris Ryan. Jessica Hayes and Loren Moss serve as kid wranglers backstage.

Steve plans to dedicate "A Christmas Story" to his Belding High School theatre teacher and mentor, David Turrill, who passed away recently of cancer.

Performances of "A Christmas Story" open at 8:00 PM at the Greenville Area Community Center on Friday, November 28, and continue there at 8:00 PM on Nov. 29, December 5 and 6. There is a 2:00 PM matinee on Sunday, Nov. 30. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$10 for senior citizens 60 and over, and \$10 for students 18 and under. They are available at the Greenville Area Community Center during regular business hours on Monday through Friday or by phone with VISA or Mastercard at (616) 754-8207.

The original publicity for the movie version of "A Christmas Story" really summed up the film well, and works just as nicely for the play. "A Tribute to the Original, Traditional, One-Hundred-Percent, Red-Blooded, Two-Fisted, All-American Christmas..." Don't miss this one!



Most of the kids from "A Christmas Story."

## President's Message - Cont. from page 2

Concessions Committee, also cited the need to spend more time with family. Thank you to both women for your dedication and hard work; we will miss you, but wish you the best as you move on. Hilda Sorvari has agreed to fill out the remaining year of Whitney's term, and we are currently searching for a replacement for Kelly.

Two thousand eight has been an exciting and productive year for the Players, but we are already looking forward to an even more exciting 2009!

Larry Moss, President

## Our Past

**30 years ago . . .** Fall 1978 - "Oklahoma!" was the first FRCP production that combined the efforts of the Greenville-based part of the group and the Barn Theater-based part. Directed by the venerable Elmer Coon, the show featured Ken Reinshuttle and Wendy Van Tassell as Curly and Laurey, Greg VanderMark and Val Schulz (now VanderMark) as Will Parker and Ado Annie, Art Hersey as Jud Fry, Tommy Sanders as Ali Hakim, Mary Brimmer as Gertie Cummings, and Helene Reinshuttle as Aunt Eller. The cast also included Jim Anderson and Julie Momber, among others.

**25 years ago . . .** Fall 1983 - This time, co-directed by Elmer Coon and David Desportes, the fall musical was "Annie Get Your Gun." Carolyn (Burns) Dombroske played the title role of Annie Oakley opposite Steve Gnewkowski as Frank Butler. Supporting roles were held by Tom Durham, Maria Tower, Eston King, Howard Wells, Lacie Chapman, Sandy Main, Val Doka, Steve Lindeman, Gerry Malling, John Beam, Karen (Turnbull) Dodds, Jim Anderson, Kay Akkerhuis, Karen Nichols, Ann Beach, and several others.

**20 years ago . . .** Fall 1988 - "Hello, Dolly!" was directed by Dwight Pennebaker and Katy McDonough. Nancy Nielsen played Dolly Levi, and Arney Mustonen was Horace Vandergelder. Sandy (Duncan) Sanders and Steve Gnewkowski were featured as Irene Molly and Cornelius Hackl. Others in the cast included Tim West, Nicole Clute, Doug Rasmussen, Lisa Borton, Pat Barnhart, Ernie Mooney, Ron Baldwin, Kyle Rush, Mike Tobey, John Beam, Carolyn (Burns) Dombroske, Deb Dieckman, Vi Christensen, Verne Stretch, Lyle Jean Sharpe, Donna Hatch, Cathy Gnewkowski, Angie Mustonen, Danell Tobey, and others.

**15 years ago . . .** Fall 1993 - "Meet Me in St. Louis" was our fall musical in '93. Directed by Kenrick Jensen with assistance of John Morais and music direction by Michael Pfister, the cast featured our FRCP young people, including: Jessie (Peacock) Gilbertson, Heidi Kulas, Wade Marr, Mary Hess, Kevin Dodd, Brooke Rasmussen, AJ Molter, Charlie Pennebaker, Garrett Stratton, Maryann Mendrea, Katie Pennebaker, April Veach, Ryan Dodd, Allyson Paris, Megan Davis, Paul Dodd, Amy Sherd, and others. Jan Meek, Vi Christensen, Sally Morais, and Dennis Hess were also in the cast.

**10 years ago . . .** Fall 1998 - After the success of "Nunsense" in 1994, it was decided to produced "Nunsense II: The Second Coming" for the fall musical of '98. Returning were the director and music director, Julie (Chapman) Jakeway and Mark Dombroske, as well as three-fifths of the cast - Jamee Gunn as Reverend Mother, Pat Cradit as Sister Robert Anne, and Deb Dieckman as Sister Amnesia. Carol Fletcher-Rahn took over the Sister Leo role, as Donita Coughlin was pregnant with her twin girls at the time. Sandy Cote became Sister Hubert, a role that was vacant because of the sad and untimely death of our original Hubert, Becky Moss.

**5 years ago . . .** Summer 2003 (See "Correction!" on pg. 3) - "Grease" was the word for the Players that summer. Directed by Ruth Hansen and Val VanderMark, with choreography by Jim Mason, the Grease kids were led by Steve Osbun as Danny and Kristy Loughin as Sandy. Tim Addis and Amanda Wagner played Kenickie and Rizzo. The other kids included Joana Johnson, Lindsay Tallian, Emily Springsteen, Marci-Anne Leysen, Catherine Litchford, Dana Shelton, Spencer Gould, Bill Ross, Jake Day, Dylan Harris, Ryan Garlick, and Mitch Winget. "Grease" adults were played by Brenda Jolls, Kathy Wickerham, Barb Headley, Dennis Hess, Leonard Cradit, Brad Smith, Tom Lafferty, Brant Gunn, Michelle Jorgensen, Deb Weeks, and Erin Bourgojn.



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