

'It's Showtime Theatre' of Huntley preparing for first performance

By Lindsay Weber Shaw Media correspondent

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HUNTLEY – For the village of Huntley, the world is soon to be a stage. On Aug. 24 and 25, under the lights of the Cosman Theater, it's showtime.

In its maiden performance, It's Showtime Theatre of Huntley will host a Broadway review concert and fundraiser called "Ticket to Broadway." Its first foray into Huntley's theater scene is in an effort to foster its 2019 premiere season. Items donated by the community will be up for auction and raffle, including theater tickets and sports memorabilia.

Rikki Lee Travolta, actor, author and host of the weekly musical theater-themed radio show, "It's Showtime with Rikki Lee" on WHRU-LP, formed the company after seeing a sign for the Huntley Park District's Cosman Theater.

"I had never heard of the Cosman and figured it was worth a call," Travolta said. "I called up the park district and asked if they had a resident theater company. They said 'no,' so I said, 'Do you want one?'"

As founding member of the Board of Advisors, Travolta said he assembled a group of six knowledgeable and gifted people for the company's board.

"No one person is the know-it-all," Travolta said. "I wanted to surround myself with people that had a passion for the arts and great knowledge-base."

Open auditions took place in June, which resulted in a 25-person cast consisting of children, teens and adults. Their mission?

"To enrich the community by presenting quality theatrical productions at an affordable price," Travolta said. "I think Huntley is a prime place for theater. Other groups in the area perform at the Cosman. We are not looking to compete. We want to complement them.

"We want to provide another avenue for local residents to participate in the arts. There

aren't many opportunities for people to perform and direct, and the passion in the area is really strong. We want to do shows that people enjoy and want to see. That is a recipe for success."

Lake in the Hills resident Aaron Gomez took the opportunity the company presented by adding the title of director to his résumé. Gomez has worn many hats in the theater world from actor to makeup artist and producer. Gomez also is secretary for Woodstock's TownSquare Players Executive Board.

"I've directed children's theater before, but this is my first production that has this type of age range," Gomez said. "I've been involved with theater since I was in fourth grade. I started doing a lot in high school with the theater department, and they became my family. Theater enveloped my life."

Along with Musical Director James Gritschke, Gomez said his goal is to place people where they shine. The review includes solo and group performances, including "Seasons of Love" from the critically acclaimed rock musical, "Rent."

Antioch resident Hannah Shepherd will perform with an ensemble as well as solo, "Kind of Woman," from the 1972 musical, "Pippin."

"It's a great opportunity to show off the new theater company to the community and get all ages involved," Shepherd said. "We can send a message to our audience and take some stress away from their day to enjoy some live entertainment."

Shepherd most recently played Alice Beineke in the Woodstock Opera House's performance of "The Addams Family." A performer since the fourth grade, Shepherd said she hopes to create art that will move people and maybe even provoke change. She said she thinks the arts are so important, especially now.

"In this day and age with so many programs being cut, it's so beneficial for kids and adults alike to have this type of outlet," Shepherd said. "I'm really excited to share the music and fun with the community."

The performances are 7:30 p.m. Aug. 24 and 25 at the Cosman Theater at the Huntley Park District, 12015 Mill St. in Huntley. Tickets are \$15 online at www.tututix.com/showtimeofhuntley as well as at the door.

The group is accepting tax-deductible donations of cash or for the event's auction and

raffle.

To arrange a donation, email Travolta at showtimehuntley@gmail.com.

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