



COMMUNITY PLAYERS  
CURTAIN CALLS

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## Steel Magnolias Opens Players' 2008-09 Season

by John and Jean Lieder

Kicking off the 2008-09 Season at Community Players Theatre is Robert Harling's comedy-drama *Steel Magnolias*. Set in 1980s Louisiana, *Steel Magnolias* is a quintessential chick play (well, what do you call the stage version of a chick flick?) with interestingly textured characters and enough hilarious Southernisms thrown in to keep the male portion of the audience delighted.

Just a few of the humorous phrases turned by the staff and customers of Truvy's include "Louie brought his new girlfriend over, and the nicest thing I can say about her is all her tattoos are spelled correctly." "Time marches on and sooner or later you realize it is marchin' across your face." And we'll forgive this one: "I do not see plays, because I can nap at home for free."

All the action takes place in Truvy's Beauty Salon, which is being constructed on our stage by newcomer **Jason Heiner** under the mentorship of **Jeremy Stiller**. The audience is successfully transported to the salon with the help of authentic beauty shop chairs (courtesy First

Edition Salon in Bloomington) and the checkerboard pattern of the salon floor, which must have been very tedious to paint and tape.

# Steel Magnolias

Director **Joann Yant**

has built a powerful ensemble with five of Players' most talented actresses and one impressive newcomer. (Yant had to choose from 30 actresses auditioning for the six roles in the all-female cast.) Making her Players' debut in the role of proprietor Truvy is **Wendi Fleming**. Fleming is on stage nearly the entire play and is the focal point of the action, though much of the conflict centers around customers M'Lynn and her daughter *Shelby*.

**Reena Rhoda** and **Rebekah Strauss** portray the mother and daughter, and they share a wonderful rapport.

Rounding out the cast are Players' stalwarts **Hannah Kearns** as Annelle (Truvy's new enigmatic assistant), long-time customer Clairee, played by **Nancy Nickerson**, and the feisty old Ouiser played by **Rosemary Luitjens**. It's especially good to see long-time veteran Luitjens back on our stage after a five-year absence.

... continued on page 3.



Members of the cast rehearse a scene from *Steel Magnolias*.

COMMUNITY PLAYERS  
Calendar

Sept. - Oct. 2008

**Board Meetings**

Sept. 9, 6:00 p.m.  
Oct. 14, 6:00 p.m.  
Community Players Theatre

**Steel Magnolias**

Preview: Sept. 4  
Shows: Sept. 5-7, 11-14, 18-20

**Guys and Dolls**

Auditions: Sept. 7 - 9  
Preview: Oct. 23  
Shows: Oct 24-26, Oct. 30-Nov.  
2, Nov. 6 - 9.

Tickets can be ordered online at  
[www.communityplayers.org](http://www.communityplayers.org).  
Click on "Online Ticket Sales."



**Community Players**

201 Robinhood Lane  
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**Newsletter Committee**

Jim Kalmbach  
Barb Lemmon  
John Lieder  
Bob McLaughlin

We are always looking for  
writers, artists, designers and  
story ideas. Send comments and  
suggestions to [lieder78@yahoo.com](mailto:lieder78@yahoo.com)

*Curtain Calls* is published six  
times a year for the voting mem-  
bers of Community Players.

For information about joining us,  
please contact our membership  
chair, Barb Lemmon at  
[barb.lemmon@comcast.net](mailto:barb.lemmon@comcast.net).

Back issues of *Curtain Calls*  
are available on the Commu-  
nity Players web site. Click on  
"Newsletter Archive."

**Guys and Dolls Auditions**

While getting ready to direct *Guys and Dolls*, I discovered something. I already knew all of the songs from this beloved musical like the back of my hand. I've never directed this toasty chestnut before, so how is that possible? Those tunes would bubble up into my head at odd moments. While doing the dishes, I would find myself humming, "I got the horse right here...!" *Why is that?* Why are those loveable tunes ingrained into our collective theatre consciousness? My theory is that it's the language of Damon Runyon, and the cadence of the wonderful world of Broadway he created that so seizes our imaginations.



*Guys and Dolls* is based on the short stories of Damon Runyon. In these stories, the former journalist created the colorful gamblers Nathan Detroit and Sky Masterson and their sweethearts Hot Box headliner Miss Adelaide and the virtuous Sarah Brown. Runyon is also responsible for creating Nicely-Nicely Johnson, Louie the Lug, Jack O'Hearts, Little Miss Marker, and The Lemon Drop Kid. With at least sixteen of his short stories being turned into movies, and his short story collections selling millions of copies in the 1930s, Runyon has earned his stripes as a man of American letters.

Jimmy Breslin wrote, "Damon Runyon invented the Broadway of *Guys and Dolls* and the Roaring Twenties, neither of which existed, but whose names and phrases became part of theater history and the American language...He made gangsters so enjoyable that they could walk off a page and across a movie screen...often to the sound of gunfire that sounded harmless...Many of his people and their actions in real life were frightening... but what does this have to do with the most important work on earth, placing merriment into the hearts of people?"

And that's what *Guys and Dolls* has done since it first opened in 1950, boasting such musical theatre perfection as "Adelaide's Lament," "Sit Down You're Rockin' the Boat," and "Luck Be a Lady Tonight." The show blindsides us with merriment. We are humbly indebted to Damon Runyon for creating a world which renders audiences giddy. I can't wait for auditions so the fun can start!

—Marcia Weiss, Director

Auditions will be held Sept. 7-9 at Players at 7:00 p.m. On the first night of auditions folks will be asked to sing 20 to 24 bars of a prepared song (please bring sheet music), and will be taught a dance number. Accompaniment will be provided. Please wear appropriate footwear. On the second night of auditions, folks will be asked to read from the script and perform the dance routine. The last night of auditions is reserved for call-backs, and for folks who may not have been able to audition Sept. 7 and 8.

The *Guys and Dolls* preview is October 23, with shows running October 24-27, October 30-November 2, and November 6-9.

## Community Players Sets Up New Volunteer Application Form

There's something new for all volunteers at Community Players that everyone should be aware of. A new Volunteer Application Form has been developed for all who participate in activities with Community Players. The form was created to ensure that all volunteers were familiar with the Productive Theatre Environment Program, a comprehensive policy prohibiting sexual harassment and child abuse/molestation. The form has been required since the beginning of this season, starting with *High School Musical*. Making sure that all participants at Community Players feel that they are in a safe environment is the primary reason for the form.

Community Players wants to promote a productive theatre environment that is free from all forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment and/or sexual abuse. In order to bring this into being, the Board of Governors met on several occasions with Tim Leighton and Carissa Haning of Leighton Legal Group, who serve as Counsel for Community Players. The Productive Theatre Environment Program was the result. It is a seventeen-page document that seeks to make all volunteers aware of various forms of harassment and to prevent it from happening. Staff members or members of the Board of Governors who hear of any complaints are required to investigate and follow the procedures listed in the policy. This procedure wasn't put in place because of any unfortunate incidents. Rather, our Counsel suggested this policy as a way to make sure that everyone involved in our productions feel safe.

The two-page Volunteer Form, which is usually filled out and signed once a person has joined a produc-

tion, either as staff or after being cast in a show, requires acknowledgment he or she has read the Productive Theatre Environment Program. A copy of the Program will be available at all auditions and is also available on the Community Players website at [http://www.communityplayers.org/images/doc\\_ptep.pdf](http://www.communityplayers.org/images/doc_ptep.pdf). Among the information required is a list of home addresses for the last ten years, driver's license number, social security number, and a copy of a valid government issued photo id. This information can be used to conduct a Criminal Background check if concerns are raised. All information is kept confidential and placed in a locked box in the Community Players safe. It is collected by the producer or director of a show and immediately given to Barb Lemmon, who as Membership Chair is the responsible Conduct Official for these forms. She will attend the first rehearsal or read-through of a production and collect as many forms as possible at that time. Volunteers may place their forms in a sealed envelope if they want an extra level of security. There is a locked box available for forms turned in when Barb is not at the theatre.

The Volunteer Application forms are good for an entire season. Barb will keep a spreadsheet with the names of all who have filled out the forms so that it will be easy to check. The forms are needed for any volunteer who plans to work in theater, from actors to scene painters to ushers.

For questions and concerns about the form, contact Carissa Haning, Counsel for Community Players, at 309-828-7600; fax 309-828-7616; e-mail [chaning@LawBloomington.com](mailto:chaning@LawBloomington.com).

...*Steel Magnolias* preview continued from page 1.

There is a tremendous amount of female-bonding that takes place in Truvy's, and these actresses are doing a marvelous job of making that happen. And all are perfecting their Louisiana dialects. It was a kick during the August 25 rehearsal to hear them suddenly drop the Southern drawls and return to Central Illinois speech to ask for a line or clarification.

Other staff members are **Tom Smith** (producer), **Judy Stroh** (assistant director and stage manager), **Mark Wright** (lighting design), **Rich Plotkin** (sound design), **Cris Embree** (costume design), **Dorothy Mundy**

(properties) and **Jean Lieder** (house manager).

Marketing Chair **Elizabeth Aronson** has created special *Steel Magnolias* ink pens to distribute to area beauty parlors to promote the show.

The pay-what-you-can preview performance is Thursday, September 4 with regular performances September 5-7, 11-14 and 18-20. As usual, evening curtain times are 7:30 with Sunday matinees commencing at 2:30. *Steel Magnolias* is a joyous, life-affirming production, but you'll want to be sure to bring an extra tissue or two.

## High School Musical a Success on Many Levels

by Jason Wiggins

Over the last three years the summer show at Community Players has been referred to as the "fundraising" show. However, the summer show has been and will continue to be focused on being our Theater for Young People program. Over the years this has taken many forms, from shows with adult casts performing a play written primarily for young people, to shows made up completely of younger actors reaching audiences of all ages. This year's production of Disney's *High School Musical* owes an amazing amount of credit to the cast of performers age 12 - 24 and the brave adults who made up the production team and crew. This fun-filled show had an enormous audience response, requiring an additional performance to be added the final Saturday afternoon. *High School Musical* became only the second show at Community Players to have more than 3,000 people attend its run. (The 1996 production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* is the other.)

One of the most exciting elements of the audience response was the number of children who attended this production. Children's tickets at Community Players are for anyone who is age 15 and younger. To give you some perspective, for the seven productions in the 2007-2008 Season (*Joseph...* through *Father of the Bride*) we had 972 children under the age of 15 attend a performance at Community Players. For *High School Musical* alone we had 1,156 children come to Community Players to experience live theater. That is what the Theater for Young People program is all about, reaching the artists who love theater and allowing them to inspire our next generation of actors, musicians, directors, and theater craftsmen.

The fundraising efforts that surround these productions are just the icing on the cake. And for the record...there was a lot of icing on this cake. The results are already starting to show up around the theater, with the new paint on the south side of the building, the repaired front door that once again locks properly, and several other projects ready to kick off this year.

## Building and Grounds News

The theatre was a busy place this past summer. In addition to record setting attendances at *High School Musical* and our Annual Cleaning Day, upgrades and repairs were done to the building. After painting the house wall and ceiling in March, workers from DJ's Painting sealed and painted the south exterior walls and doors. Be sure to take a look at the finished product next time you visit the theatre. Also, technicians from Crawford and Brinkman Window and Door were able to repair the front glass doors so that they actually lock easily now at both the top and bottom. In addition to fixing the inner workings of the door, they put on new exit bars.

### Annual Cleaning Day

The annual cleaning day was held at the theatre on Saturday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>. House and Grounds Chair John Lieder would like to thank the following volunteers who put in several hours of hard work helping him spruce things up: **Barb Lemmon, Cathy Sutliff, Karen Clark, Kathy and Bruce Parrish, Elizabeth Aronson, Ted and Joan Ichniowski and Kameron Cox.**

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*It is time to renew your Community Players membership. Please fill out the enclosed form and send it (and your \$10 dues) to the theatre.*

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Technicians from Crawford and Brinkman Door & Window Company repair the front glass doors.

