Acting Out: Teen Theater

By Amy Stutzman  Staff Writer

Middle and high school students going through the tumultuous teenage years have a safe place to share their experiences through a program at James Madison University.

According to the program’s website, the program is called Teen Theater: Acting Out. Acting Out is a teen theater group meeting once a week that offers teenagers aged 12-18 a place to discuss and work through issues they are experiencing. The program is open to any interested high school or middle school student.

The free semester-long program utilizes games, theater, improvisation, discussion, and journals to explore many issues, such as parental conflict, divorce, sexuality, and stereotypes, among others. From those experiences, the students create scenes for a play that is performed at the end of the semester for friends, family, and the community. Last semester, students involved in Acting Out performed, “In Our Own Words” at the Court Square Grill Collective.

Teen Theater: Acting Out was begun in 1997 by Marylin O. Wakefield, professor of social work at JMU. “The program was started in response to a need in the community for more organizations to aid in the prevention of teen problems,” according to the website.

Along with teen theater, the Acting Out program also has Acting OutREACH. By going into schools and after-school programs, Acting OutREACH helps students deal with many issues such as peer pressure, bullying and conflict resolution, among others. Through the free one-hour sessions, teens learn how to accept responsibility for their choices and actions.

According to the program’s website, both Teen Theater: Acting Out and Acting OutREACH hope to be a positive influence in the community where they can provide a place for teenagers to “explore their dreams, accomplishments, hurts, and disappointments.”

For more information about Teen Theater: Acting Out or Acting OutREACH, visit www.socwork.jmu.edu/actingout/ or call (540) 568-6488.

What’s Up in the ‘Burg (and Beyond)?

Thursday, October 23
• Open Mic Night at the Little Grill Collective
• Hurlyburly performed at the Playhouse. Call 432-0634 for more information.

Friday, October 24
• Latino Night at La Hacienda Restaurant, 10 p.m. - 2 a.m.
• Hurlyburly performed at the Playhouse. Call 432-0634 for more information.

Saturday, October 25
• Harrisonburg Farmer’s Market at Water Street

Tuesday, October 28
• Acoustic Folk at Dave’s Taverna, 8 p.m.
• Harrisonburg Farmer’s Market at Water Street

Wednesday, October 29
• Jazz at Dave’s Taverna, 8 p.m.
• Karaoke Night at La Hacienda Restaurant

Thursday, October 30
• Open Mic Night at the Little Grill Collective

Parking Deck, 7 a.m. - 1 p.m.
• Shenandoah Farmer’s Market at Woodstock, located in the Shenandoah County Office Building parking lot, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.
• Latino Night at La Hacienda Restaurant, 9 p.m. - 2 a.m.
• Hurlyburly performed at the Playhouse. Call 432-0634 for more information.

Sunday, October 26
• Open Mic Night at Dave’s Taverna, 8 - 11 p.m.

Museum Opens Its Doors For Good

Children’s Museum Receives a One-Year Lease in Response to Requests

By Rachel Swartzendruber  Burger Editor

The next summer brought temporary, but more permanent facilities, with the lease of a space for seven weeks, where they held their most recent program, Metamorphosis. “We wanted to emphasize change,” said Shull.

Metamorphosis was incredibly successful. “We had over 7,000 visits in seven weeks,” said Shull. “People were asking us to ‘please keep this going.’”

Shull and others were finally able to respond to that call. The lease was renewed for one year, until August 31 of 2004, and their doors opened officially on October 14.

Current exhibits include topics such as weather, the farmer’s market, and construction. The construction site, for example, has equipment and materials where children can set up electric circuits and (if successful) see a light bulb turn on due to their wiring efforts.

All exhibits are staffed by volunteers. In fact, there are only three paid employees in the organization: Shull and two other managers who rotate among exhibits, giving advice and offering help.

“We are always looking for help,” said Shull. “We rely on volunteers and their support. Volunteering is for anyone who has a love for children, learning, and wants to gain experience or share a talent.”

Persons interested in membership options have their choice between six memberships, ranging from an Individual Membership for $30 and a Corporate Membership for $500. The Individual Membership provides many benefits, such as unlimited admission, 3 single-use guest passes, and other perks.

For more on membership information, volunteer information, or browsing for curiosity’s sake, persons can visit www.hcmuseum.org, e-mail the museum at hcmkids@aol.com, call 442-8900, or simply stop by the museum for a look around.

Admission is $3 for all, adults and children, and free for children under the age of two.