

Bag&Baggage Wants to be Your Theatre Company

When Bag&Baggage Productions came to Vernonia this past December and performed their version of Charles Dickens *A Christmas Carol*, it is likely that most locals were probably unaware that this theatre company existed.

Bag & Baggage, who call the Venetian Theatre in Hillsboro their regular home, arrived in town and helped celebrate *The Spirit of Christmas in Vernonia* on December 7th. Their interpretation of the Dickens classic was a lively, humorous and well produced show.

But, if it was the first time many Vernonians had heard of Bag&Baggage, Artistic Director Scott Palmer hopes it won't be the last.

"We're a suburban theatre company," said Palmer in a recent interview. "We can look in either two

directions for an audience; east to Portland where there are literally hundreds of competing and very good theatre groups. Or we can look to communities on the west side, like Forest Grove, Cornelius and Vernonia-to audiences that don't have much access to theatre. It's in our best interest to reach out to those communities. We want you to think of us as your theatre company."

With that in mind, Bag&Baggage is making a special offer to Vernonia residents for their upcoming production of *Lear* at the Venetian Theatre which runs from March 6 to the 23. Vernonia residents can receive 25% off tickets to any regularly scheduled performance. "This is a get-to-know-us offer," explained Palmer. "It's an introductory offer and a way for us to welcome our neighbors in Vernonia who might not know us."

Bag&Baggage has found additional ways to make community outreach and accessibility a real priority. They have an education program which offers high school students the opportunity to come to the theatre, for free! "When I was



Kevin Connell as Lear, Benjamin Farmer as Perillus, Stephanie Leppert as Cordelia, Rebecca Ridenour as Goneril and Jessi Walters as Regan in the Bag&Baggage production of Lear. Photo courtesy of Casey Campbell Photography.

in high school, we traveled to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland," said Palmer. "Those types of opportunities don't really exist anymore. We're worried that generations of high school students will never have a chance to experience professional performing arts. We believe those high school students are our next generation of patrons and so we're reaching out to them to give them access to our work."

Through the education program any high school student can show up the day of a performance, show valid school identification and receive a free ticket to that show. "I hope that parents and teachers will go to our website, take a look at our upcoming schedule, and find something appropriate to bring their students to see," says Palmer.

Bag&Baggage also offer special rates for their preview performances. According to Palmer opening night of each new show is always on a Friday. On the first Thursday night of each run they offer slightly discounted tickets, for what the cast and crew consider a sort of dress rehearsal, with the caveat that they reserve the right to stop and restart the show if something goes terribly wrong. "We've never had that happen, but it is nice for the cast to perform to a somewhat smaller audience the first time through," explains Palmer.

As part of their community outreach and their visit to Vernonia this past December, Bag&Baggage included discussions with community members, both prior to and following their performance, which asked about ways that their theatre company could engage with the local community. "It makes sense for us to talk with our audience about how we can better serve you and welcome you warmly," says Palmer. "We want to reach out. That is a big part of our missions; to make theater engaging and accessible."

Bag&Baggage was founded in 2005 with an original mission to travel the state of Oregon performing high quality, accessible, classical theatre for communities without a resident professional theatre. The small group

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Cox Leaving at End of School Year

Vernonia School District Superintendent Dr. Kenneth Cox has informed the School Board that he will be resigning his position at the end of the current school year.

The School Board accepted Cox's resignation at the regular School Board Meeting on February 13th. Board Chair Bill Langmaid told the Board that Cox's current contract expires on June 30, 2014 and that Cox has informed him that he is not interested in renewing the contract.

Cox retired his full time position last May as a way to cut costs for the District. He was immediately rehired by the School Board and has been working half time while he searched for a new position.

Cox came to the Vernonia School District as Superintendent in 2006. He was in charge of the District when all three school building were damaged in the 2007 Flood and has been instrumental in the demolition of the old school campus and construction of the new school facility which opened in September of 2012.

The School Board announced they will open an

internal search for a replacement starting February 17th and ending February 24th. As part of the replacement process the School Board is requesting community input on the qualities and qualifications they



would like in a Superintendent. Examples would be: Excellent communicator and listener; High degree of integrity/honesty; Good budgeting skills; Active in community.

Community members are asked to send their input by February 20th to Barb Carr at the District office at: bcarr@vernonia.k12.or.us. Input will also be taken at a School Town Hall meeting scheduled for February 25th at 7:00 PM at the School Commons.

There's A Lot to Check Out at the Vernonia Library

By Scott Laird

Many local citizens use and enjoy the Vernonia Public Library on a regular basis. We check out books and videos, use the computers to access the internet and maybe attend a special program once in a while.

But there is a lot more going on at your Library than you might realize, much of it volunteer driven.

Library Director Jen-

nifer Moloney is pleased with the numerous opportunities the Vernonia Library provides and about the support she has been receiving from community members and organizations.

"We like to have as many programs as possible here," says Moloney. "In a small community like this, that is what the Library needs to be. Anything culturally relevant that we can provide for

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Shaune Moreland is an AmeriCorp volunteer working with the Columbia County Emergency Management Department.

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