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Crowdsourcing commences to save community movie theater

Drive-in theater being built

Story and Photos by Luke WhittakerCoast River Business Journal
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LONG BEACH — The Long Beach community is rallying to help save a community movie theater following the recent COVID-related restrictions that threatened to shutter the business.

More than \$4,320 was raised as of Dec. 1 on the crowdsourcing site GoFundMe for Neptune Theatre in Long Beach.

The campaign was officially launched on Nov. 15 by a friend who was concerned about the theater's future following the most recent shutdown. The community-led campaign to save the theater came as a surprise to owner Kaarina Stotts.

"I had no idea that it was happening. I found out after the fact. A long-time local (Chris Eros) started it because he doesn't want to see the theater go under. It was very kind and thoughtful," Stotts said.

Crowdsourcing funds contribute to drive-in construction

The money raised will have an immediate impact on the future of the theater, including a new addition.

"(We're) going to hopefully get a drive-in up which is much more costly than one would think, but to keep costs down, I'll be taking apart my second theater to do it."

The idea for a drive-in theater arose during the first shutdown in the spring, Stotts said.

"Back during the first lockdown it was something other theaters were doing, but there was no way I could as my whole property was fenced off and I had all the construction going on. I had a ton of locals message me asking if I could do it but I couldn't at the time. But I did look into it a bit just for kicks. Now that we are shut down again, I made a few phone calls to see if it would be doable and it sounds like it can but it all really comes down to money," Stotts said.

Stotts estimated the overall cost for a drive-in would be around \$55,000.

"The largest expense will be to clear property for the cars to drive and park, which is going to be around \$40,000," she said.

The experience of a drive-in theater would be well worth it.

"I've never actually been to one, always thought it would be a fun experience," Stotts said.

To donate, visit www.gofundme.com/help-keep-the-neptune-theatre-afloat.



ABOVE: Clearing and excavation work has begun in preparation for a drive-in theater behind the existing Neptune Theatre in Long Beach. "The largest expense will be to clear property for the cars to drive and park, which is going to be around \$40,000," Stotts said. **LEFT:** Neptune Movie House owner Kaarina Stotts and her son, Aarin, 13, pose for a photo inside the theater on Oct. 28 in Long Beach.

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