



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley
Jeff Minden and Kevin Crawford act out a scene from Heaven Can Wait, opening Friday at the Kroc Center.

HEAVEN: Kroc Center hosts play this time

(Continued from Page A1) doing a different role this time and seeing it from a different perspective," Minden said. "Joe's a fantastic character. He's so honest and earnest and straight forward but also just so not right. He also talks a lot so that's been a challenge, getting the lines down. But it's also so much fun, really finding him and channeling him and getting into character."

Minden already had a background in CrossFit but has added boxing workouts to get into character.

Craig Will has been cast as the messenger. Kevin Crawford, one of the founders of Aumsville Community Theatre, is playing Mr. Jordan, who is in charge of finding another body after Pendleton's manger Max Levene, played by Sam Tibbits, cremated his body.

Jordan finds the wealthy Jonathan Farnsworth, who is about to be murdered by his wife Julia, played by Allison Reid. While in Farnsworth's body, Pendleton falls in love with Bette Logan, a naïve, sweet young woman played by Elizabeth Ming.

"This is the first time she's played the ingenue," Baker said of Ming. "Everybody wants to

Leaf haul Nov. 18

The Fall Leaf Haul is scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 18 and Saturday, Dec. 2 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Brown's Island Demolition Landfill, located at 2895 Faragate St. S in Salem.

Homeowners may drop off grass clippings and leaves to turn them into local compost. Properly disposing of leaves keeps them out of storm drains, preventing clogged storm drains and flooding.

Seniors and disabled residents can call Center 50+ at 503-588-6303 for help transporting bagged leaves to collection sites. You must sign up in advance.

LIGHT, continued from Page A1

He'd also gone through treatment before. He knew the things he was supposed to say and do, but not how to apply them to the way he lived. Part of the problem was he could never find someone to connect with at treatment centers.

Early attempts with treatment also left him feeling cynical about the process, he met with one counselor who told him he understood what Curtis was going through because the counselor had smoked pot.

"I asked him if he'd ever stuck a syringe in his neck and his mind was blown. I told him to shut the eff up," Curtis said.

However, in a strange way, the encounter set him on the path he's following now.

"From that day on, I knew that if I was able to get to the place I wanted to be, I would be able to tell people I did understand," Curtis said.

After two weeks at Pacific Ridge, Curtis got permission to transfer to Oregon Trail Recovery (OTR) in Portland. His days were filled with mandatory group and individual therapy meetings at OTR and he was encouraged to find others he'd be willing to attend. He earned his first shot at a job in years. He worked in construction, then in a paint shop, then in fast food.

The program required him to do many things he found uncomfortable like find a sponsor he could be open and honest with, re-establish relationships with family and even pray. Custis' hackles went up at the latter, but he gave in to that, too.

"I said I didn't come here to pray and then my sponsor reminded me I said I was willing to go any lengths to get this. Once he said that, I knew

I would go stand on my head in the corner for three hours if that's what they told me to do," Curtis said.

He soared in his recovery and in his responsibilities at work. Curtis was contemplating moving into fast food management when OTR hired him as a client support specialist, house manager and addiction interventionist. He's been doing that for almost a year now and is approaching his second anniversary clean and sober.

"I am the front line of the treatment center. I live with the clients and have to lead as an example. I have a level of accountability that is unbelievable," Curtis said. "My clients are either fresh off the street, fresh out of detox, fresh out of jail or fresh off of treatment."

Curtis runs their group meeting, helps them with transportation and has even traveled to Tennessee and California to guide others through intervention training.

When his clients relapse, Curtis is the one to confiscate their drugs and paraphernalia. He is able to dispose of it without giving into temptation by keeping his focus on the needs of the clients.

"I put myself in their shoes knowing what it would have been like to have had someone step in and take away the thing that was killing me," Curtis said.

Recently, he's found himself buying more button-up shirts than he's ever owned in his life. He keeps giving them away to new clients headed to job interviews.

"The professional part of it is still a challenge. What was really difficult was transitioning between the ways I talk on the street and how to talk in meetings," he said. "When you put me in a situation with clinicians, they almost have to decipher my language."

He knows the odds are against most of his clients, but his favorites are the ones with long criminal histories and lots of experience with drugs.

"That stuff fires me up. I live for watching these guys who come in filled with hatred and

fear and anger and watching them turn into people who are happy and joyous and free. Living a life they didn't know was possible," Curtis said.

His experience with addiction has led to insights he now shares freely. Curtis laments the current way society chooses to deal with addicts, by tossing them in jails and and prisons.

"You're punishing people for killing themselves. Why do you want to kick me when I'm down? If we could put people in treatment rather than prison, prisons wouldn't be so full," he said.

For those who encounter addiction among friends and loved ones, Curtis cautions against trying to relate when there isn't enough common ground.

"Don't act like you know what it feels like. If my clients have gone through something I haven't gone through, I tell them that. I tell them I don't understand that, but tell me what that is like. Come from a place of compassion and understanding and love," he said.

Of all the changes in Curtis' life over the past two years, this enthusiasm for other people and their needs — ones who arrive in his life as complete strangers — is the most

stunning. When I met him in November 2016, Mary and his younger sister joined us. At one point in the conversation, his sister broke down crying when she talked about fears of being the one to find him dead of a heroin overdose. Unprompted, Curtis said he felt nothing about his sister's tears any longer.

He sees more clearly now how he was able to be so calm.

"I had learned to disconnect myself. I had watched people die over and over. In my eyes other people were a liability. It was my way of protecting myself. If I showed emotion, it meant I was weak," Curtis said. "When I was cleaning up my mess — and I'm still doing that — I was talking with her she told me all she wanted was for me to be there for her children. She has kids now and I'm there for them. I am able to be present in their lives and money can't buy that."

Mary said the changes are a complete 180-degree turn.

"What I know is that this is where he needs to be and his life up to now has led to this. It was hell living through it, but he's giving back in amazing ways. His life was so dark and it's not now," Mary said.

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CREATORS NEWS SERVICE By Charles Preston

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- 8 Asparagus
- 12 Podrida pots
- 15 Lacoste of tennis
- 16 Exam
- 17 Teacher's stand
- 19 Scotia
- 20 Government report
- 21 What's ___ for me?
- 22 Ben of Lew Wallace story
- 23 Was victorious
- 24 Songbird
- 26 Fake: abbr.
- 28 In ___ : kept as a surety
- 31 Syst. of units
- 32 Kind of bean
- 34 Of blood
- 36 Work: physics
- 37 Fish delicacy
- 38 Membranous partitions
- 42 Ointment
- 44 Reject
- 45 Pitching stat.
- 48 Restrain
- 51 Vicinity

DOWN

- 52 Cows do this to cuds
- 54 Yes, in Rouen
- 56 "My Gal" name
- 57 Canadian prov.
- 58 Reverie
- 62 Uttered
- 63 Makes changes, as on prints
- 64 English school
- 65 Hautboy
- 66 Belief
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- 1 Small quail
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- 4 Unhappy sounds
- 5 Giant step
- 6 Concerning
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- 8 Invigorating drink
- 9 Incompatible with life's pattern
- 10 Topping a road surface
- 11 Lists of candidates
- 13 Do lines

- 14 Turn at an angle
- 18 Elks' org.
- 25 ___ chard
- 27 Ring wins: abbr.
- 29 Rah, for one
- 30 Dau. or bro.
- 33 Within ___ of
- 35 Onion
- 37 Miss Gabor
- 39 Taking chase
- 40 Worked an old Singer
- 41 Psychologists
- 43 Uncultivated
- 45 Penciller's helper
- 46 Tie together
- 47 Combat
- 49 Jersey corral
- 50 Music
- 53 ___ truck with: avoided
- 55 Say it ___ so
- 59 Hebrew weight
- 60 Fragrance
- 61 Terrace: abbr.