

FLORENCE

Grace & Glorie

Class Act Theatre
opens with
heartfelt play



Tamara Szalewski as "Gloria" (left)
and Sue Sweatt as "Grace"

COURTESY PHOTOS

“**G**race and Glorie” by Tom Ziegler is a warm, funny, touching and heartfelt play about two strong women who are thrown together by circumstances that neither can control. Their wildly different backgrounds, but surprisingly similar personalities, form the basis for some great humor and explosive drama.

Performances are at the Class Act Theatre on Fridays and Saturdays, Aug. 5, 6, 12 and 13, at 7 p.m., and Sundays, Aug. 7 and 14, at 2 p.m.

Grace, played by veteran actress Sue Sweatt, is a 90-year-old feisty, cantankerous, self-described “backwoods redneck.” She has recently been discharged from the hospital and just wants to live out her final days in her tiny cabin near her beloved apple trees.

In a conversation about Grace, Sue Sweatt said, “She is immensely strong, especially in her resistance to the roles expected of her. (She) rebelled the only way she knew how... Her crisis of faith due to pain and fear ask the questions we all want answered. The fact that she has followed her beliefs is amazing.”

Gloria, played by veteran stage and TV actress Tamara Szalewski, is a newly relocated high-powered New York City executive. She has traded her big city art galleries and opera for a new position as a local Hospice volunteer. Grace is her third client. Gloria just wants to help, but she has her own issues regarding death and dying.

She is “struggling for answers (and) understanding,” says Szalewski. “Life takes all of us, and life

takes everything we have to give. You do not get to choose what happens to you, but you do get to choose how you respond.”

The play is co-directed by Paula Lindekugel-Willis and James Wellington, both of Florence.

“The show has dual directions” said Lindekugel-Willis. “Natural humor evolves from the contrasting characters and their different backgrounds.”

“And, each character has to learn to accept death in their own ways” added Wellington. “The show is an amazing mix of humor and drama.”

“Grace and Glorie” is the perfect opening play for the first season of Florence’s newest live theater venue, the Class Act Theatre (CAT).

Bringing an intimate live performance venue to Florence is a dream come true for owner/producers David and Rosemary Lauria.

They purchased the building in February 2015 and have spent the last year and a half working on its transformation.

Now complete, they hosted a free grand opening show on July 9 and by all accounts the space was all they had hoped it would be.

See **CAT** page 12