

LRP to present 'A Christmas Story' Dec. 13-16

The Last Resort Players (LRP) invites the community to come back in time to Christmas 1938 in small town America — when kids listened to radio shows, watched cowboy westerns on Saturdays and walked to school for miles in a snow storm.

Rising young actor Shiloh Penrod takes the stage this December as Ralphie Parker in the holiday classic, "A Christmas Story," with visions of a tacky leg lamp, being blinded by soap poisoning, Scut Farkas (the school bully) and of course, a Red Ryder BB Gun, dancing in his head.

Never mind that he has been warned by all the grown-ups "he'll shoot his eye out;" his Christmas wish is to own that air rifle and he'll go to great lengths to convince his parents and Santa he should have it.

The story was originally written by humorist, actor and author Jean Shepherd in the 1970s about his childhood in Indiana and published in his book "In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash." In 1983, Turner Entertainment produced the television film, "A Christmas Story," which has since become a cult classic during the holiday season.

Shepherd's voice can be heard as the narrator in the film, as it captures the anticipation and angst of a boy at Christmas. In 1999, a two-act theater stage production was adapted by Phillip Grecian and the iconic leg lamp continues to glow every year on stage, on television and in our hearts.

For this Last Resort Players stage performance, veteran actor Gary Miller portrays the narrator, Ralph Parker, all grown up, as he retells his memories in fantasy and flourish. He recounts the days leading up to Christmas and the many events that made this holiday the most memorable of all, including the escapades with his two best friends, Schwartz and Flick, played by students Treyson



COURTESY PHOTO

Young cast members from the Last Resort Players' upcoming production of "A Christmas Story."

Loomis and Takla Blas.

Ralphie's parents are played by Shawn Penrod as "the Old Man" and lovely Laura Miller as doting Mother Parker. Both Shawn and Laura bring a special twinkle to their parts. The role of Ralphie's little brother Randy is played by young comedian and second grader, Jobie Gates.

Family resemblance is no coincidence, as Shawn and Shiloh are actually real-life father and son. In addition, Shiloh and Jobie have known each other since Jobie was born 8 years ago — so they are as close as real brothers might be.

The show is filled with hysterical and touching moments, from scenes of a tongue stuck to a flagpole to the memory of young Ralphie accidentally uttering "the bad word" in front of his father, who has his own special language of euphemisms.

The patient teacher, Miss Shields, is portrayed by Portia Shields, who has her own special moments in the show, including her own fantasies of her students turning in well-written theme papers.

School children that bring the classroom scenes to life are: Joey Haines as the bully Scut Farkus, Matilda Hand as his

sidekick Grover Dill, Vera Blas as the studious Helen Weathers, Sylvia Hand as Ester Jane Alberty (Ralphie's elementary school crush), Clara Ledbetter as the happy-go-lucky Mary Roxanne and Eleanor Hand as the big sister Grace Schwartz.

The kids appear in several scenes throughout the show, including the department store "Santaland," where Schwartz's baby brother Marley Treyson will also make an appearance.

Adding to the humor and rounding out the joyful, community cast are Grant Hammond, Madelynn Levi, Paul Deemer, Ernie Leone, Michelle Dougherty, Briana Loomis, Sarah Cavallero and Dorland Neale as Santa Claus.

They appear throughout the show in various cameo roles.

Behind the scenes, the Last Resort Players production team is comprised of Jennifer Chaney as stage director, Cathy Dupont and Portia Neff as assistant directors and Sheri Susee as stage manager.

Dana Rodet will direct the set building, Sabrina Hand will coordinate costumes and Karylynn Keppol will lend her creativity as properties mistress. Paula Ziegelasch, Angela Apodaca, Alysha Atkinson and Matt Miller will assist with backstage

production elements.

"A Christmas Story" will be performed under the lights on the flat floor at the Florence Events Center on Thursday through Saturday, Dec. 13 to 15, at 7 p.m., with a 2 p.m. matinee performance on Sunday, Dec. 16.

Tickets are limited, so plan for the holidays and buy your tickets now at the FEC box office, online at EventCenter.org or by calling 541-997-1994 between 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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FRAA gets into 'Spirit of Giving' with tree

The non-profit organization, Florence Regional Arts Alliance (FRAA), is offering customers a special way to do some Christmas shopping/ decorating while giving back to youth in our area.

FRAA artists are donating all sales of the handmade items on the gallery's "Spirit of Giving" Christmas tree to the Mapleton Art Program.

Art instructor Jessi Nelson teaches to all grade levels, from

kindergarten through 12th.

"I would use the donated funds to add to the school supplies for ceramics, tapestry weaving and relief printmaking," Nelson said. "I base my curriculum around skill-building through various media, as well as the principles and elements of art."

FRAA Art Center and Gallery is located at 120 Maple St. in Historic Old Town Florence.

The resident artists invite the

community to come by and see their beautifully decorated tree Wednesday through Sunday from now until Christmas.

Also, be sure to stop by on "Shop Small" Saturday, Nov. 24, as FRAA will be serving spiced apple cider, mimosas and cookies to customers starting at 2 p.m.

It's FRAA's way of saying "thank you" for supporting local small businesses.



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