

Happy February!



CTAM
Community Theatre Association of Michigan

CALLBOARD

February 2026

CTAM Awards are back!

Submit your nominations before June 30

With awards season here, it is a great time to announce that after a brief hiatus ... **CTAM Awards are back!**

CTAM offers several awards that recognize outstanding individuals who serve their local theatre communities and CTAM at large. There are so many shining, hardworking members in our organizations and this is one of the small ways that we can help say 'thank you'! If you know anyone that meets the criteria for any of our awards, make sure to nominate them. Below is a list of the awards that will be making their encore debut back into CTAM's programming.

Robert A. McKenna Award

CTAM's most prestigious award was established in 1987 to honor Robert A. McKenna – a longtime CTAM friend, supporter and actor in Michigan – who epitomized the spirit of community theatre. The McKenna is given annually at our Fall Conference to a living person who exhibits, through action, commitment and dedication, his or her support of community theatre on the state and local level, with 10+ years of service to their local theatre. A nomination may be submitted for the Board's consideration by any current CTAM affiliate group or current CTAM associate member.

The Dorothy Arnett Volunteer Service Award

This award offers an opportunity for your group to have CTAM recognize volunteers for long-term service within your group.

The Dorothy Arnett Volunteer Service Award is presented by CTAM to those individuals who have given valuable, long-term service to your theatre organization. Each year any CTAM affiliate member is allowed to recommend an individual or couple who has given valuable and significant service to their local group *for at least ten years*. CTAM will consider all valid nominations and is allowed to grant up to six such awards per year.

CTAM Rising Star Award

This award recognizes individuals who have had an impact on the advancement of CTAM, made contributions that develop higher standards for Michigan community theatre, or who have made far reaching contributions to their local community theatres. These awards will be presented at the Fall Conference, or in the recipient's home theater.

Nomination forms can be found on the CTAM website, and the deadline for nominations is June 30. We look forward to hearing from all of you about your amazing members and how they make your theatres sparkle.

<https://ctam.online/ctam-awards-nomination-form/>



HELPING COMMUNITY THEATRE *THRIVE* IN MICHIGAN SINCE 1951!



**Community Theatre
Association of Michigan**

2024-25 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Muskegon Civic Theatre

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Callboard

EditorMary Lou Britton

This is the official newsletter of the Community Theatre Association of Michigan, issued monthly to all group affiliates and individual members with e-mail addresses on record. Distribution is by e-mail with a link to the newsletter on the association website. Back issues are available on the association website. Correspondence to the **Callboard** should be sent to maryloubritton@gmail.com. *Updated e-mail and postal addresses are maintained by the Administrator and should be sent to CTAMthrives@gmail.com.*

Playwriting Contest deadline is Memorial Day -- May 25, 2026

The theme for your 10-minute play for next year's CTAM Playwriting Contest is **Winning and Losing**. For the short play section of the contest, your play must focus on some aspect of **winning or losing** something or someone!

Just think about all the possible dramatic situations you can conjure up, using that scenario! Betting on the ponies ... investing your IRA money on a sure thing ... watching your daughter's soccer game ... losing your winning lottery ticket ... losing your hearing ... winning a crooked poker game and then losing your car keys ... the list goes on and on!

The CTAM 2026 Playwriting Contest is underway with a submission deadline of **Memorial Day 2026**, giving you plenty of time to get your entry ready. Winners will be announced at next year's Fall Conference. There are two categories: Full-length plays and ten-minute plays. The full-length plays do not fall under the topical suggestion above.

Full-length plays must be a normal evening's entertainment of 90+ minutes; the short play should not be longer than 10 minutes. Whereas the full-length play can involve any number of characters, settings, scenes and costumes, the shorter play should be a single location (no scene changes or passage of time), contemporary language and minimal set dressing, props and costumes.

The contest in either category is open to residents of Michigan and should be accompanied by a letter of acknowledgement from a CTAM affiliate group. This letter only states that the theatre group is aware of the playwright and supports their effort, but not that the author is necessarily a member. The purpose of the letter is to connect the affiliate group with additional talent in the community and to remind the playwright that CTAM affiliate groups are interested in their new work and supportive of the effort.

To enter, email your .pdf file to playwriting@CTAM.online by the deadline of Monday, May 25, 2026. Questions to the same address, please!





Left is a scene from 5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche, presented by Stagecrafters in Royal Oak.



Below is the youth ensemble from Players de Noc in Escanaba with their production of The Best Christmas Pageant Ever.



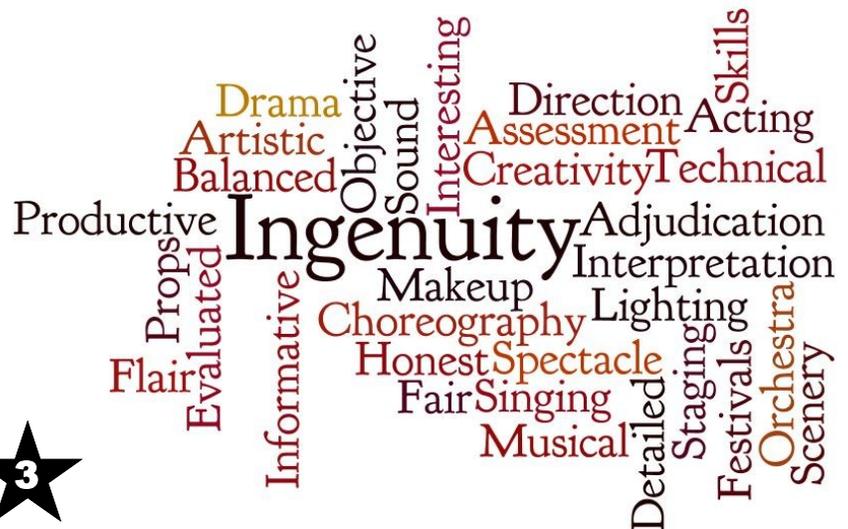
Have you scheduled your adjudications yet for this season?

Everyone is busy, deep in the depths of getting ready for your next production, but remember that CTAM has trained adjudicators, ready and eager to visit your group and adjudicate one of your productions. As a benefit of your CTAM annual affiliate dues, each member group gets one free adjudication per membership year. After that, your group pays a modest fee for additional adjudications.

AACT adjudication is two-fold: to accurately reflect to the performing company what has been successfully achieved, and to outline reasonable steps that might be taken to enhance interpretation of the story. As a director you will learn how to interpret your productions differently and, as an audience member, you will watch the productions with a different understanding.

Adjudicators are an independent second pair of eyes, looking at your production and seeing things you may not have noticed. Adjudications are not 're-directing' or a pass/fail situation, but rather a starting point for improvement in future shows.

If you want to make arrangements for an adjudication this season, contact Adjudication Chair Betsy Willis at ryonwillis915@gmail.com.



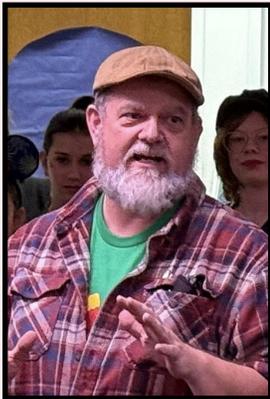
Our theatre friends in the UP need some assistance!

Players de Noc (Escanaba) is in need of some assistance in several areas of training and adjudication. Following their devastating fire last May, they faced many hurdles in regards to theater technology and working in a space that is somewhat unfamiliar -- along with having to become familiar with new lighting and sound equipment. These have led them to seek some in-house training to better equip their volunteers with the tools they need to succeed and the knowledge they need to survive.

They are hoping CTAM can help secure sound engineer training with a technician that is knowledgeable in DANTE networked sound, and familiar with the Berringer family of soundboards (specifically a 48 channel wing). They are also in need of in-depth training on a variety of Intelegent lighting practices and DMX infrastructure. They are using the latest ETC Ion board and hoping to have someone familiar with that system work with about a half dozen of their new folks interested in lighting.

If you know of anyone (or is it you?) who can help Players de Noc, please reach out to:

- Jamie Peterson, 906-241-7500 (below left)
- Mr.jamiepeterson@gmail.com



Muskegon Civic scores new Executive Director!

Muskegon Civic Theatre is welcoming their new Executive Director, Dr. Caitlin Cowan!

Caitlin is a writer, nonprofit administrator, educator, musician, and lifelong arts advocate. A native Michigander and University of Michigan alum, Caitlin returned to Michigan in 2018 after earning graduate degrees in English at The New School and the University of North Texas. After seven years directing Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp's international and creative writing programs, she's thrilled to be joining the Muskegon Civic Theatre as its Executive Director.

From her high school pit orchestra days, to teaching drama and rhetoric at the university level, to working with young actors and European community theatre groups at Blue Lake, Caitlin has an abiding love of the theatre and its magic. Above all, she is passionate about the arts and the work that nonprofits do to support them. Caitlin is also the author of two award-winning books of poetry: *Solitary* (YesYes Books, 2027) and *Happy Everything* (Cornerstone Press, 2024). She lives in Muskegon's Lakeside neighborhood with her husband John, their two young daughters, and two mischievous cats. Welcome to the CTAM community, Caitlin!





The Prez Sez...

BY CHUCK GODDEERIS
CTAM PRESIDENT

A new year is upon us, which means new resolutions and initiatives. However, our mission remains the same – helping community theatres to thrive and improve.

Primarily we accomplish this through our On The Road Workshops (OTR), Fall Conference and Adjudications. In addition to in-person OTR workshops, we are holding numerous webinars this year. We started with our January Webinar – the Volunteer Factor – presented by the amazing Emily Anderson from Midland Center for the Arts (among numerous other theatre organizations with which she participates) and also available on our [YouTube channel](#). For February and March, we are lining up webinars on how to find grants and alternative funding in your area so you aren't relying solely on MACC grants, generous donors or ticket sales to keep you going. Look for more information in emails and on our social channel as we are finalizing details for two such webinars and should be announcing them the first week of February.



Is it time for the Easter Bunny already?

Speaking of MACC grants, applications were open for a brief period of January, so we hope you were able to apply. We have submitted our own grant application (thank you Betsy Willis!) and most of the funds we get from this application go directly to our educational programs, such as securing workshop leaders for On The Road classes and Fall Conference, as well as helping theatres receive adjudications, which helps them learn what they are doing well and areas which they could improve upon that they may not realize.

Thanks to our reinvigorated group of Board members, we are also revitalizing and refreshing our Awards Program, featured on the front page of this newsletter. We want to make sure we recognize those individuals and groups doing great work on a regular basis and feel like we have let this aspect slip through the cracks post-pandemic so it will be an additional focus for our team this year.

Additionally, as always, our Board members will be reaching out each month to our groups to find out what tools and resources they need to help their theatres thrive. We want to work with you to meet your specific needs so if you're struggling to find time to connect with our Board members, then be on the lookout for a simple survey this month to help us understand how we can better serve your community. And don't forget you can always fill out [Help Center form](#) to request assistance as well.

Finally, if you know of anyone interested in helping connect with other theatres to keep these conversations going, please let us know. Our Nominating Committee is meeting on a regular basis, and we are seeking individuals to serve on our committees and eventually serve on our Board. Whether you have background in finances, managing volunteers, marketing, directing, etc., we welcome people of all talents and backgrounds to join us.

Remember, we are here to help community theatre thrive!



What's on the boards around Michigan?

The community in East Tawas loved this teen production of Chicago so much, they won a \$5,000 grant from USG Alabaster. One local non-profit each year is selected and the WE Players won for 2025! Congratulations to a very imaginative and creative group!



Below, Ben Henri, left, and Doug Clark, right, belt out an astonishing duet in a recent production of A Little Night Music for Grosse Pointe Theatre.



Above, Clarkston Village Players and their recent production of The Spitfire Grill.



Farmington Players Barn Theater offered a great production of Lend Me A Tenor!

Before You Agree to Serve on a Board of Directors

Do Your Homework!

If you have ever served on a Board of Directors, you've probably had some second thoughts at some point. "What in the world have I gotten myself into!" The probability of that happening can be greatly reduced if you ask a series of relevant questions *before* you say 'Yes!'

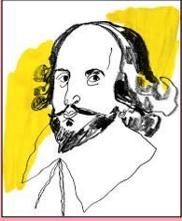
When you are recruited to serve on a volunteer Board of Directors, expect the person recruiting you (or the organization) to cover the following points.

- What is the mission of the organization, as well as the current programs and services of the organization designed to serve that mission?
- How is the organization structured? Is it a tax-exempt organization? Does it have 501(c)(3) status? Are the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws available?
- Does the organization provide directors protection from lawsuits by having Directors and Officers liability insurance?
- Ask for current financial data, i.e. the last audit (or more), as well as the last 12 months of financial statements and where to find others, should you wish to review them at some other time.
- Clarify your term of office and ask for a list of other members of the Board including positions, terms, address and telephone numbers.
- Committee titles and descriptions of their work, including authority, work schedule, names of the other committee members, the chairman's name and contact information -- plus the committee assignment, if any, you are expected to fulfill and how many committees board members are expected to chair or serve on.
- A list of the major board policies; i.e. Conflict of Interest, policies for working with children, whistleblower policies, discrimination, etc.
- Are all volunteers checked for background concerns, such as sex offenders, past criminal convictions, etc.? How, when, and by whom is that accomplished?
- Job descriptions for Board members and officers.
- The organizational chart and the history of the organization.
- List of staff members and their job descriptions.
- Policy, board, or operation manuals (or copies of documents) of the organization.
- The last 12 months of meeting minutes and where to find others, should you wish to review them later.
- The current long-range or strategic action plan.
- A list of board development training opportunities that you might receive to improve your skills and your service to the organization.
- Must you be a member of the organization, how much is the annual membership? Are you expected to give to other fundraising efforts, such as annual giving campaigns? How much and how often?



If you get good and satisfactory answers to all these questions before you agree to serve, we can guarantee that you will be better informed than most of the current Board members!





Playwright's Corner

By Mary Lou Britton

How to get started with writing your new play

Did you make a New Year's resolution to finally get back to writing and submit a play to the CTAM Playwriting contest? If so, how are you going about that challenge?

Once you've decided to face your demons and do something about it, what's your first step? If you're serious, then you've probably been thinking about possible ideas and themes and characters all along. Do you write them down somewhere, all in once place? Bless your heart, if so. It's a nice habit to get into!

Cull through your collection of thoughts and ideas to see if they still seem like a good idea. I find that what seems like a good idea at the time has since lost its urgency or meaning. The world times often negate my ideas or cause them to be obsolete.

If you have to start from the very scratch beginning, think about what kind of characters you are comfortable with. Lovers, killers, flim-flam artists, circus performers, students, carpenters, dancers, etc. Then think about a situational conflict that might happen in the chosen field. You want a storyline that is conflict-driven, capable of creating realistic drama.

Let these ideas roll around in your head for a day or week and let the characters speak to you and tell you their story. Let them talk! They don't need to be lines in your future play necessarily, but the characters will reveal themselves in untold ways at very unusual times.

Just as a side note, don't sit at your computer screen and expect this step to handle itself. You need to go about your normal life and let the ideas ebb and flow. Writer's block will surely attack if you don't give your brain enough time in advance to fully develop the concept for your play.

When you think you have a concept that might fly, write down your character descriptions and see how they fit together. Do you need additional characters ... do you have too many? Try out some ideas for backstories for the characters. What do they do for a living? Who do they live with? Where? What's their relationship?

Try a few lines of the script from these characters and see if they seem real? Do you know someone who would say that? Do you like that person in real life?

Now that you have your characters lined up, move on to the plot. Create a conflict-driven storyline that will be resolved in some manner. It doesn't have to be a happy ending (they get married in the backyard under an arbor of white lilies -- or perhaps the new cancer treatment fails and grandfather dies.)

Tell the plot story to someone like you're telling a long joke. See what their reaction is. Did it make sense? Were they interested and have questions for you after you were done? Based on their response, adjust your plot and know that you're ready to really begin writing.

Many playwrights choose to write the ending first and then go back and write to that scene. I generally start with the first spoken line and then let the characters guide me to the ending. But I always know what the ending is -- perhaps not the last line, but at least the resolution to the conflict.

After you've written your first draft, print it out and put it away in a drawer somewhere and don't touch it for a week or so. Then, get it out and read it, making changes that now seem warranted. Then put it away for another week and see how you feel. Number your pages!

After a month or so of this routine, pass the play on to an editor to proofread your script for typos, grammatical errors and missing words. Don't ever overlook this step because nothing brands you as a beginner or unskilled playwright faster than typos and grammatical errors!

I hope these ideas help you get started with your winning script for the 2026 CTAM playwriting competition! Please see the article on page 2 for more specifics about this year's playwriting contest!

Michigan Theatre in February +!

The Sauk, Jonesville	<i>Arsenic and Old Lace</i>	February 5 - 15, 2026
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre	<i>The SpongeBob Musical - Youth</i>	February 6 - 15, 2026
Holland Community Theatre	<i>Mom's Gift</i>	February 6 - 21, 2026
Old Town Playhouse	<i>Misery (main stage)</i>	February 13 - 21, 2026
Clio Cast and Crew	<i>Snow White and the 7 Dwarfs</i>	February 13 - 22, 2026
Community Theatre of Howell	<i>Our Town</i>	February 13 - 22, 2026
Stagecrafters	<i>Agatha Christie's Murder On The Orient Express</i>	February 13 - March 1, 2026
Muskegon Civic Theatre	<i>Love Loss and What I Wore</i>	February 14 - 22, 2026
Grosse Pointe Theatre	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	February 19 - March 1, 2026
Pit and Balcony - After Dark Productions	<i>For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide when the Rainbow is Enuf</i>	February 20 & 21, 2026
Bay City Players	<i>Morning After Grace</i>	February 20 - 22, 2026
Livonia Community Players	<i>The White Rose</i>	February 20 - 28, 2026
Southgate Community Players	<i>You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown</i>	February 20 - 28, 2026
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre	<i>Dogfight</i>	February 20 - March 1, 2026
WE Players	<i>Acts of God</i>	February 20 - March 1, 2026
Owosso Community Players	<i>Frozen</i>	February 20 - March 8, 2026
Twin City Players	<i>Emma</i>	February 20 - March 8, 2026
Northern Lites Readers Theatre	<i>Pack Your Bags - Travel Tales</i>	February 21 & 22, 2026
Central Park Players	<i>Marjorie Prime</i>	February 27 - March 8, 2026
Flint Community Players	<i>Pipeline</i>	February 27 - March 8, 2026
Midland Center for the Arts	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>	February 27 - March 8, 2026
Monroe Community Players	<i>Silent Sky</i>	February 27 - March 8, 2026
Pinckney Players	<i>Frozen Jr. *</i>	February 28 - March 2, 2026
Three Rivers Community Players	<i>She Kills Monsters</i>	March 6 - 15, 2026
Avon Players Theatre	<i>Holmes and Watson</i>	March 6 - 21, 2026
Clarkston Village Players	<i>A Shayna Maidel</i>	March 6 - 21, 2026
Players de Noc	<i>The Producers</i>	March 5 - 21, 2026
Players Guild of Dearborn	<i>Next to Normal</i>	March 6 - 22, 2026
Village Players of Birmingham	<i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i>	March 6 - 22, 2026
Ann Arbor Civic Theatre	<i>She Kills Monsters</i>	March 12 - 15, 2026
Alpena Civic Theatre	<i>Finding Gladys</i>	March 12 - 22, 2026
Old Town Playhouse	<i>Paint Night **</i>	March 13 - 21, 2026
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre	<i>Angels in America, Part 1 Millennium Approaches</i>	March 13 - 22, 2026
Grosse Pointe Theatre	<i>The Wizard of Oz *</i>	March 13 - 22, 2026
Bay City Players	<i>Peter and the Starcatcher</i>	March 14 - 22, 2026

* Indicates youth production. ** Second stage production

✓ If your information is incorrect or missing and you are an affiliate group of CTAM, please send the correct information to CTAMthrives@gmail.com to be included in the next issue.

