



CTAM CALLBOARD

March 2024

Date set for Tuesday, March 19 at 7 pm

March Roundtable to focus on money: How to Increase Your Theatre's Fundraising

The CTAM Board keeps asking our members what they want from CTAM ... what can we do to help you thrive? We are always grateful for your responses and we pay attention to what you say! This month's Roundtable is in direct response to comments about what you want to see at future conferences and meetings. We need more money, you say!

The March Roundtable will address that -- exactly! Alan Semonian has been at CTAM conferences and meetings for years ... and he's here again to help you raise money for your theatre group. Please plan to join us on Tuesday, March 19, via Zoom for words of wisdom from Alan. We make great effort to keep these sessions at one hour!

To register: <https://forms.gle/5WFXHVVYJeEk6h7i9> There is no charge for the Roundtable, but you do need to register so that you can receive the meeting codes in advance.

About our Roundtable Leader: *Alan Semonian is currently the Executive Director and Administrative Vice President of Stagecrafters community theatre, located in Royal Oak. He is a Certified Public Accountant and financial advisor who has been President of his own company, Ameritax Plus, for 37 years. He received his B.A. in Economics and French from Albion College and a Masters in Business Administration from Harvard University.*

The focus of his accounting and tax practice has been to teach entrepreneurs how to run their business and make them successful. His strong understanding of finance, operations, and management issues has made it possible to make community theatre a successful and thriving enterprise, even during a pandemic! Alan has served on numerous non-profit boards (civic, civil rights, community, artistic, and religious) in which he has motivated volunteers and spearheaded large fundraisers. In addition, he has been a leader in the local business community in which he has served as President of the Berkley Chamber of Commerce, as well as chair of the Berkley Downtown Development Authority.



Alan Semonian

HELPING COMMUNITY THEATRE *THRIVE* IN MICHIGAN SINCE 1951!



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Association of Michigan**

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Callboard

Editor.....**Mary 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.*

Meeting your CTAM Board of Directors

One of our newest board members - but not a stranger to CTAM - is **Heather Grimes**. Heather is a member of Players de Noc in Escanaba and has served in almost every capacity of that theatre. On stage in many roles and backstage including serving as their board president....but there are still a few things we didn't know about Heather.



- Heather is the Escanaba two-time Ace Race Champion (for those who don't know, it is a disc golf tournament.) Heather has more than twenty trophies on her shelves from three states. She and her husband have been playing for 20 years in every weather condition.
- Heather is in a band, Wingin' It, with her dad and two friends
- Heather is a retired Certified Veterinary Technician. She worked in the animal field for almost 23 years. While working in Milwaukee at the animal emergency hospital she administered the first Human Albumin transfusion to a very sick puppy, who recovered and went home one week later.
- Heather is Whip-it Wednesday - A Roller Derby Queen who loves to hit hard!
- She loves fishing more than Christmas!
- And in real life, she is the Event Coordinator for the Bonifas Art Center in Escanaba where the Players perform.

It's a blessing to have Heather on the Board, Her clear thinking is a real gift that I appreciate after every meeting and interaction!

-- Mary Jo DeNolf





Nothing is Important

It's no surprise to anybody but life today is busy. We never seem to have the time we need to get everything done it seems to be especially so for those of us who live in the theater world. I have to count myself as being part of that rat race. Right now, I'm at the busiest part of my year. I have three shows in various stages of production right now and I just might have agreed to slide a fourth show into this time frame also. So that's four shows in the next three months!

When you add on to that all the pressures that technology and social media demand in our lives, then, ye,s there's never enough time. One of the things that I like to do when I'm working in my prop shop is to either listen to an audiobook or to a podcast. I find that doing this allows me to settle into that creative mindset and just roll with the flow as I'm working.

A few weeks back I was doing just that working on props for *Descendants the Musical* and I had a podcast on that was talking about the difficulties of navigating modern technology and social media and how much it affects our daily lives. During that podcast it was suggested what all of us already know: we need to step back from all of that technology and social media and just be ourselves and let life slow down a bit, but that's hard.

One of the things that they suggested was to learn how to do absolutely nothing. I remember laughing and thinking, "Yeah, right! That is just a waste of time and I'll get even less done." But over the next few days that statement kept drifting in and out of my brain and I thought, "What the heck, let's give it a try. What could possibly be so difficult as doing absolutely nothing?"

So late one afternoon I sat down in my recliner and had everything turned off, no music no laptop, no TV, just me and the recliner. I figured I'd see how long I could sit there doing absolutely nothing as an experiment.

This would be easy! Well, I have to tell you I was pretty floored by how difficult it was to just sit there and do absolutely nothing. I managed to do it for an entire five minutes before I was fidgeting and squirming in my seat.

The difficulty of this rather intrigued me and got me looking further into this idea of doing absolutely nothing and why it might actually be important. What I discovered was that it was kind of like meditation but not meditation. When you meditate you sit or lay quietly and concentrate on your breath just to breathe in and breathe out and let yourself drift away into allegedly nothingness of the moment. They suggested that doing absolutely nothing was being there in the moment but acknowledging what was going on around you but not really thinking about it.

The example they used to explain this was the experience of driving along and suddenly we're at the end of our journey and don't remember how we got there. It's that kind of state of mind you are trying to create where your mind has just been allowed to wander and do what it does and you're just in the moment.

So, with this newfound perspective I sat down again to attempt to do absolutely nothing. I set a goal of doing it for 10 minutes. I sat down, took a deep breath, and just listened to all the quiet sounds of my home. This time it was a little bit easier. I didn't think or worry about where my mind wandered. I just let the thoughts come in, drift away and go wherever they felt like it. I stared out the window; I looked at the fireplace mantle, and just let life pass by. I know for a while I even just closed my eyes and sat and rocked.

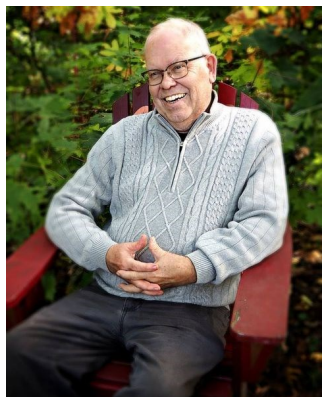
This time I made it the whole 10 minutes. I took another deep breath and got up and was really quite amazed at not only how refreshed I felt but energized as well. Maybe there was something to this, we really do need to do, and practice doing absolutely nothing. Since then, I have been trying to do nothing every day. I've managed to get my time built up to where I can actually sit and do absolutely nothing for 30 minutes. I'm amazingly proud of this accomplishment! Something



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that sounds so silly and time wasting has become such an important part of my day that it is actually on my daily To Do list.

Now you have to understand, I'm a prop master, lists are important. I have lists of lists and when some-



thing is on the list it gets done. So, the fact that I have chosen to put doing absolutely nothing on my daily To Do list should tell you how important it has become to me. For me, it seems that the best time of day to do this is somewhere in the late morning or early afternoon when I've hit that energy slump. Taking the time to do absolutely nothing

energizes me so that I'm getting so much more accomplished the rest of the afternoon which for me is not my most productive part of the day.

I've tried doing nothingness in the evening, thinking it would help me relax and turn off my brain. Well, that was a mistake! I found that I was not relaxed, but rather energized and ready to go for a couple more hours in the evening.. Probably not the best frame of mind to be in at bedtime.

So, I would like to challenge each of you to try this little experiment yourself. Sit down and learn how to be comfortable just being in the moment, watching the world go by and doing absolutely nothing.



Photos from Muskegon Civic Theatre's recent productions.



Out and About

With Mary Jo Denolf,
CTAM Administrator



As the CTAM Administrator, I feel it is important and beneficial to visit our community theatres across Michigan. On the night of November 30th, I went to Muskegon Civic Theatre to see *Calendar Girls*. Along with me was CTAM President, Michael Wilson and AACT Corporate Partner Manager, Jill Patchin.

If you haven't been to Muskegon Civic before, they use two performance spaces downtown at the Frauenthal Center. For this production they used the Beardsly Auditorium that has a wonderful intimate feel with just 170 seats. Most of you are familiar with the story of *Calendar Girls*. It's a heartwarming true story of friendship, filled with laughter, sorrow and spirit, as one of them loses her beloved husband.

Penelope Notter was the Director and did a great job with her casting of characters. The ensemble worked closely together and were truly believable as friends. A key part of this production is ensuring that the cast is comfortable in their middle age skin, as they shed a few clothes for their cause. Staged beautifully with fluid motion, it felt as if you were watching the story naturally unfold. Intimacy Coordinator, Kristin McCloskey wonderfully assisted with this process. Set Design by Erin McDonald moved easily and effortlessly when going from inside to outside scenes. And I cannot forget the costumes designed by Susan Eyler. Not only were they on point for each scene, but the quick changes by the backstage crew were speedy and impressive.

Congratulations to the entire production company of Muskegon Civic for this great night of entertainment!

CTAM would love to hear your stories of "Out and About." So, if you are traveling across the state, or just going across town to attend a fellow theatre's production, let us know by telling CTAM what a fabulous time you had visiting another theatre. It's great to share a quick, heartfelt story of your experience.



Theatre this Spring in Michigan

Feb 16 - March 3, 2024	WE PLAYERS	<i>Almost Maine</i>
Feb 23-25 & March 1-3, 2024	PORT AUSTIN COMMUNITY PLAYERS	<i>Making God Laugh</i>
February 23-25, March 1-3, 2024	IONIA COMMUNITY THEATRE	<i>She Kills Monsters</i>
Feb 23 - March 3, 2024	OWOSSO COMMUNITY PLAYERS	<i>Anastasia</i>
Feb 23 - March 16, 2024	OLD TOWN PLAYHOUSE	<i>Beauty and the Beast</i>
Feb 23-25, March 1-3, 2024	BAY CITY PLAYERS	<i>The Odd Couple</i>
Feb 29 - March 9, 2024	PLAYERS DENOC	<i>Lumberjacks in Love</i>
Feb 29 - March 10, 2024	FLINT COMMUNITY PLAYERS	<i>Hamlet</i>
Mach 1-17, 2024	TWIN CITY PLAYERS	<i>The Red Velvet Cake War</i>
March 1 - 17, 2024	GRAND RAPIDS CIVIC THEATRE	<i>Descendants</i>
March 3 - 23, 2024	MASTER ARTS	<i>Barefoot in the Park</i>
March 7 - 17, 2024	ALPENA CIVIC THEATRE	<i>And Then There Were None</i>
March 8 - 17, 2024	KALAMAZOO CIVIC THEATRE	<i>39 Steps</i>
March 8 - 17, 2024	CENTRAL PARK PLAYERS	<i>Half Baked</i>
March 8-23, 2023	CLARKSTON VILLAGE PLAYERS	<i>The Girl on the Train</i>
March 8 - 23, 2024	AVON PLAYERS	<i>Drinking Alone</i>
March 8-24, 2024	VILLAGE PLAYERS OF BIRMINGHAM	<i>The Cemetery Club</i>
March 8-24, 2024	PLAYERS GUILD OF DEARBORN	<i>Our Town</i>
March 12 - 17, 2024	COMMUNITY THEATRE OF HOWELL	<i>A Year with Frog and Toad</i>
March 15 - 24, 2024	PIT AND BALCONY	<i>The Play That Goes Wrong</i>
March 21 - 24, 2024	THE SAUK	<i>Sauk Shorts</i>
March 29 - April 7, 2024	SOUTHGATE COMMUNITY PLAYERS	<i>While the Lights Were Out</i>
April 5 - 13, 2024	OLD TOWN PLAYHOUSE	<i>Radium Girls</i>
April 5- 14, 2024	KALAMAZOO CIVIC THEATRE	<i>Forever Plaid</i>
April 5 - 14, 2024	GROSSE POINTE THEATRE	<i>The Play That Goes Wrong</i>
April 6 & 7, 2024	NORTHERN LITES READERS THEATRE	<i>Witness for the Prosecution: A Radio</i>
April 11-27, 2024	HOLLAND COMMUNITY THEATRE	<i>On Golden Pond</i>
April 12-21, 2024	MIDLAND CENTER FOR THE ARTS	<i>Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike</i>
April 12 - 21, 2024	CLIO CAST AND CREW	<i>Cinderella of Loveland</i>
April 12 - 21, 2024	FENTON VILLAGE PLAYERS	<i>Southern Fried Nuptials</i>
April 13 - 21, 2204	PINCKNEY PLAYERS	<i>Charlotte's Web</i>
May 17 & 18, 2024	GRAND RAPIDS CIVIC THEATRE	<i>Ten for All</i>
April 19-28, 2024	OWOSSO COMMUNITY PLAYERS	<i>Murder on the Orient Express</i>
April 19 - 28, 2024	KALAMAZOO CIVIC THEATRE	<i>The Lion King Jr.</i>
April 19 - May 5, 2024	GRAND RAPIDS CIVIC THEATRE	<i>Murder on the Orient Express</i>
April 25 - May 4, 2024	MASTER ARTS	<i>See Rock City</i>

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

Tawas Bay Players debuts Readers' Theatre

Tawas Bay Players took a giant leap into the world of Readers' Theatre recently and Leo and Pat Paveglio from Cadillac came to see our last performance of *Tawas Chillers: Readers' Theatre*.

The Paveglios have extensive experience with community theatre and readers' theatre. In December 2018 Pat formed the Northern Lites Readers' Theatre in Cadillac which is now getting full houses and performing four shows a year, plus shorter shows for non-profit groups. Jolene Grusecki, Suzan Nemeth, and I learned so much from them. Re-viewing my notes, I noticed that much of the comments refer to all theatre.

We asked for their thoughts and reactions to the play, much like an adjudication, and here are some of their comments:

- ✓ Regarding readers' theatre in particular: the difference between reading the stage directions or using a narrator is huge. For example, in our longer skit we should have shortened, consolidated, and edited the stage directions. The audience (our audience, in particular!) generally can figure things out quicker than you think, and certainly much quicker than the playwright anticipated.
- ✓ During shorter pieces, always stand up. Projection is improved and not only is the actor more focused, but the audience is more focused on the actor reading.
- ✓ Regarding stories under five minutes, tell them rather than read them. Pam Frank did that with "Appointment in Samarra" effectively.
- ✓ For our comedic skits, Pat and Leo said, "Go big, or go home"my words, not theirs, but that was the gist. They encouraged the actors to show more emotion; get out of your chair during the madness of "The Telltale Heart", for instance. Scream longer and louder. Can you be too loud on stage? I doubt it.
- ✓ During an action sequence, such as an argument or a fight, make sure your lines are loud and clear.
- ✓ Pat made an interesting and vital point: at the beginning of any production, talk slower

because the audience needs to adjust to the world that you are creating and learn about the characters you are creating in this world.

- ✓ Pat made a slight reference to our exits and entrances. We knew that they weren't great. They are difficult and often need more rehearsal than the actual reading. A week before we opened, Suzan said to me, "I never thought we needed to rehearse the entrances and exits so much." It was frustrating at the time, but a growth experience for us.
- ✓ Pat and Leo said, "Tawas Bay Players really know how to set the stage." They commented on the lobby décor, the ghosts on the bathroom mirrors and the ushers in costume. Thank you, Janie Mundy and your team!

No matter what you're doing, an extra set of eyes (or two!) or even just comments from a knowledgeable friend can make a big difference.

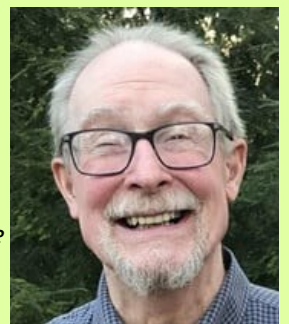
In summary, this was our first attempt at readers' theatre. Looking back, I realize now how valuable having Pat and Leo stop by was. As much experience as Suzan and I have in community theatre, we knew very little about creating a readers' theatre event.

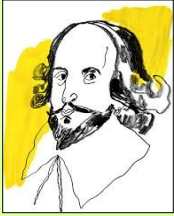
-- Tara Western

To Leo with Love: Goodnight, Sweet Prince

He was a prince of a man. Sadly, Leo Paveglio died unexpectedly December 12. He was a kind, fascinating man, willing to share his joy and knowledge of theatre (and many other topics) with anyone and everyone. If you had a meal, a drink, a conversation with Leo, you would be friends for life. He will be greatly missed by everyone who knew him and especially, by us, the CTAM members who were enriched by his presence.

Our condolences to his wife, Pat, and to all the members of Cadillac Footlites and Northern Lites Readers' Theatre who will also miss him a great deal.





Scripts Worth Noting

Here's a play with a unique plot; it's called, *You Just Have No Idea*, by Detroit-area playwright, Cecelia Reuter Lesner. The heroine, Annabelle, is a wonderful loving woman but she is also very insecure, passive, and somewhat depressed. Most of the world takes advantage of her, including her mother and boyfriend, so she is seeking therapy, hoping to find what she needs to be happy NOW! Joanne, her therapist, sends her home from her session with these words of encouragement, "You know what you need to do, just listen to the little voice in your head and you will be fine." But that is where it all gets crazy!!

The disillusioned Annabelle returns home to find her takeout order is wrong and then her mother calls and starts to hassle her. Annabelle is very nearly at her wit's end when Ben Quiet Too Long, the first of her many voices, jumps out from behind the couch! She is frightened at the sight of this big, burly, gruff old man in her home. Ben works quickly to calm her by reassuring her that he is a voice in her head that she's been ignoring, so he had to break out to offer her the help she needs. Ben instructs her to stand up for herself, and leaves before she can truly process what has happened. Then her loser boyfriend, Rodney, knocks at the door, barges in and is followed by Surely Love Yourself, another voice that looks like a Fairy Godmother, here to help Annabelle with her self-esteem issues. Rodney gets scared when Annabelle is talking to someone that he cannot see or hear, so he accuses her of using drugs and runs off!

Still, yet another voice appears! It is Ima Real Beauty, the party-girl voice, who is thrilled that Annabelle has happy pills!

Comfort Me, Annabelle's inner self, is the next voice who is played by a large male dressed in footed pajamas. Comfy lets her know if she doesn't love herself, her inner child is afraid no one else will love her either. He is silly, loves popcorn with caramel (which may account for his size) and wants Annabelle to learn to love and comfort them both.

The last voice is a Motorcycle Mama who is played by the same actress who plays the therapist, which really throws Annabelle into a tailspin! Her name is Bea You and she wants Annabelle to let go of the programming she received from her upbringing and to begin to think with her own brain! She is dressed in leather and chains which seem to help inspire Annabelle!

This would be a simple enough plot, but the inner voices begin to bicker hilariously with one another. Each one thinks their goal is more important than the others and Annabelle must constantly intercede to get them to focus on her! Annabelle asks, "If you are all a part of me, why do you constantly argue"? Simply enough, they explain, "We are the living breathing definition of inner struggles"!

This play can be done with a minimal set, costumes, and props. It was well received in each of the three venues where it has been produced in the Detroit Area over the last 10 years. It is full of one liners, zany characters, and outrageous costumes, making it a fun show for actors to perform. It is comedy, chaos, and some heart-warming messages as Annabelle finds her way to Happy.

The author Cecelia Lesner can be contacted at cecerl@mac.com regarding permission and royalties.



Far left, Surely Love Yourself and Comfort Me.

Center, Ben Quiet Too Long and Bea You.

Right, our heroine Annabelle with her loser boyfriend, Rodney.



The Scoop on Scripts

By Tara Western



Bye Bye Bye!

This column, 'Scoop on Scripts,' debuted in the November 2017 issue of the Callboard. I have truly enjoyed the experience and the biggest bonus was reading so many scripts....139 to be exact.

Wait, it's a tie: communicating with playwrights and directors has also been a joy. May I drop some names? In no apparent order: Linda LaRocque, David Durham, Chuck Godderis, Leeds Bird, Jim Carter, David MacGregor, Maripat Allen, Jean Ciampi, and Tony Targan. Advice and support from Pat and Leo Paveglio, long the chairs of the CTAM playwrighting contest, was invaluable.

But the time has come, my friends. In the last seven years, my eyes have aged! Yes, believe it or not! I am an avid reader, so adding the reading of scripts in small print every month has become untenable.

In addition, finding good scripts is problematic. Free scripts are few and far between, and I am not willing to purchase them on speculation. So, my fellow thespians, that's it.

Should inspiration strike, I hope to periodically write articles about community theatre. I'd love to see more articles about what's going on at your theatre, sharing knowledge from a variety of perspectives. Think about it, please. I know the Editor would love it.

So long for now.

-- Tara Western

Ed note: It's hard to say 'so long' to Tara who has been such a wonderful colleague and supporter of this newsletter. Her columns were always in way before deadline and took very little editing. They were printable as received.

Many, many thanks, Tara, and I'm sure I'll see you around at AACTfest and other CTAM gatherings.

Should any readers want to contribute similar columns for the upcoming months, please feel free to do so. Pay is undying gratitude and our many thanks for your contribution! Send to Editor maryloubritton@gmail.com

Follow-up to February's Roundtable on going to AACTfest

Thank you to everyone who attended the CTAM Roundtable "How to go to AACTFest." It was a spirited discussion and many thoughtful tips were shared.

The Festivals are just around the corner (Spring of 2025!); CTAM will be announcing exact locations and dates very soon and we hope to see all of you there. Remember that Michigan will host not only the Michigan Festival in 2025, but this is also our year to host the Regional Festival, which includes Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio, Illinois and, of course, Michigan. We are collectively known as Region 3 of American Association of Community Theatre (AACT),

For more information on the process, please visit AACT website: (<https://aact.org/festival-cycle>) page on the general information and links to the Handbook and other information. The AACTFest25 Handbook should be online by end of this month.

Michigan is in the catbird's seat for the Festival competition because our JR Bornemann from Midland (and our CTAM vice president) will be the National AACTFest Technical Director and he can answer any questions about the technical needs. His email: jbornemann229@gmail.com. Also, our CTAM Administrator, Mary Jo Denolf, is also the national AACT Festival Coordinator. For AACTfest inquiries, she can be reached at maryjo@aact.org

Once the Festival Coordinators for both events have been selected, we will be sharing their information so you can contact them directly for festival questions.

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