



Photos by The Mattesons

Making Theater for Everyone A Jukebox for the Algonquin at Lebowsky Center

At its best, community theater is more than entertainment - it is a reflection of the people it serves. It creates opportunities for performers of all ages, backgrounds, and experiences to step into the spotlight and tell stories that matter. In Owosso, the Lebowsky Center for Performing Arts recent production of A Jukebox for the Algonquin is a shining example of that mission in action.

Director Mike Windnagle says the script itself was what first drew them to the production. "The writing is so wonderful that when the script was presented to the production committee, I just knew it had to be something I was a part of. So, in short, the writing."

Though unfamiliar with the story at first, they quickly discovered its universal truth. "It's funny, the story was not something I was familiar with, but during the process of mounting the production, I was surprised to discover that it is something we are all familiar with."

That truth centers on aging - an experience shared by everyone, yet rarely explored with humor and dignity on stage. "There aren't a lot of shows that are written for people of a certain age," the director explains. "This script was created to show how vibrant and funny and meaningful old age can be. I don't know many things that could be more relevant."

Productions like A Jukebox for the Algonquin also create meaningful opportunities for mature performers, whose stories and talents deserve to be celebrated. "It's important to know that if theater is something you enjoy creating, that you can keep on creating it well into your twilight years," they say. "It's not fair to be shelved simply because you 'age out.' That's clear discrimination, and it has no place in theater."

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Director Mike Windnagle

Host Theatre Needed

AACT Festival will be approaching sooner than we think and CTAM is searching for a Host Theatre for Michigan State AACTFest27.

Theatre needed to host the state festival. Dates can be Jan - March, 2027 or whatever meets your needs. Just needs to be at least two weeks prior to the Regional Festival - which will be hosted by Illinois in early April.

For more information - please contact Mary Jo DeNolf, CTAM Administrator - ctamthrives@gmail.com

SAVE THE DATE:

Saturday, September 26, 2026

CTAM FALL CONFERENCE

Join us for a day of collaboration, creative problem-solving and resources to strengthen your theater and programs.



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Submit articles, upcoming events and any other theatre related news before the end of each month for publication in the next issue.

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.

Up-dated e-mail and postal addresses are maintained by the Administrator and should be sent to CTAMthrives@gmail.com.

Once again, CTAM is excited to bring high-quality workshops directly to your theatre.

We understand the challenge—and cost—of asking volunteers to travel long distances for a single workshop. So instead, let us bring the workshop to you! Even better... CTAM covers the workshop fee.

How It Works

- Gather your team
- Meet with your volunteers and decide what type of workshop would benefit your theatre most.
- Reach out to CTAM
- Email ctamthrives@gmail.com with your workshop request and a couple of preferred dates
- We do the legwork
- CTAM will find a qualified workshop leader who can travel to your theatre.
- Collaborate on details
- We'll connect you with the workshop leader to finalize structure, timing, and content.
- Make it official
- CTAM will create a contract between CTAM, your theatre and the workshop leader.

Types of Workshops:

- Any type of theatre workshop including: board development, fundraising/grant writing, front of house, ticketing, box office, sound, lights, sets, props, directing, acting to name a few.

CTAM covers the workshop stipend and also the travel and mileage. Your theatre provides lunch for the workshop leader and hotel stay if an overnight is required. CTAM will help promote your workshop and your theatre provides feedback and photos for future promotion of events.

Ready to get started? Email ctamthrives@gmail.com today and bring an On the Road Workshop to your theatre!

CTAM's goal is simple: Help theatres thrive, learn, and connect with other theatres and leaders across the state.



A scene from the Grosse Pointe Theatre production of Matilda The Musical performed in April 2026 (photo provided).

Directing a seasoned cast brought its own rewards. “They were a dream to direct,” the director shares. “Many of them have directed shows of their own. I worried that egos would come into play, but not with this cast. They offered up suggestions when asked and really let me direct them without complaint. It was a wonderful process.”

The production’s blend of comedy and emotion has resonated deeply both on and off stage. During the run of the show, the director experienced the loss of their father, making the play’s themes of grief, resilience, and friendship especially personal.

“This show taught me to ‘live’ my father rather than ‘miss’ him, and it gave me permission to grieve in my own way. Yes, I cried. I still cry. But that is the point of making good theater. It is compelling and spellbinding and holds up a mirror.”

For the Lebowsky Center, selecting stories like this reflects a commitment to inclusion that goes beyond words. “Our theater is here to provide a safe space for all people no matter their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, age, etc. I think the selection of this show furthers that mission much more than a mission statement on a website somewhere.”

Perhaps most encouraging has been the response from audiences of all generations. “Many of our regular patrons have come, but I have seen more high school-aged folks than I ever anticipated, and their feedback has been amazing.”

That response underscores one of community theater’s greatest strengths: its ability to unite people through shared experiences while honoring different perspectives. As the director puts it, “Community theater is exactly that - a community of diverse individuals who can be touched by the same piece of art in a myriad of ways. How lucky are we to be able to see the same thing so beautifully different? Community theater is where it’s at!”

With A Jukebox for the Algonquin, the Lebowsky Center reminds us that theater truly is for everyone - on stage, in the audience, and in the stories we choose to tell.



Photos by The Mattesons



Volunteer Spotlight Mary Lou Britton



Very few volunteers have made an impact on community theatre in Michigan like Grosse Pointe Theatre’s (GPT) own Mary Lou Britton. Her contributions to CTAM alone are immeasurable, but we’ll try to quantify them here.

She has been volunteering with CTAM since 1974 in a myriad of roles. She served as President from 2012 – 2015, but even more impressive than that she has been the Callboard Editor since 2009 producing over 160 issues for us. Mary Lou received our prestigious McKenna Award in 2006 and was honored again with a CTAM Volunteer Spirit Award in 2018.

In addition to being recognized by CTAM for her contributions, she also received the AACT David C. Bryant Outstanding Service Award in 2024, which also recognized her contributions to GPT, who she started volunteering with in 1965. Mary Lou is still going strong and continues to be a vibrant volunteer for both GPT and CTAM. One of her biggest passions has always been writing, and while she has stepped down as our Callboard Editor (handing off the reins to Amy Jo Brown who clearly has big shoes to fill), she continues to serve as our Playwriting Contest chair, having taken over the role in 2025.

We know our Playwriting Contest is in great hands because she founded GPT’s Take Ten Festival (for 10-minute plays), which is now in its 13th year and has performances in May (check GPT’s website for details). Don’t forget to finish up your full-length play submission or start your first 10-minute play today. Full details on our contest rules are on our website.

So, as you can see, her legacy is long lasting and still going strong. We cannot thank Mary Lou enough for her decades of service and her years of service still to come.

What's up with AACT?

ZOOM WEBINAR - MAY 20 - WITH AACT STAFF

Please join AACT staff members, Winston Daniels, Karen Matheny, David VanCleve and Mary Jo DeNolf on Wednesday, May 20 - 5pm

This informal conversation will center around AACTFest, opportunities within AACT, and ways we can strengthen participation and collaboration across the state's theatre community. More importantly, this will provide a beautiful opportunity to hear from all of you - your ideas, questions, and hopes for how we can all build something even stronger together.

[Click here to enter the Zoom link.](#)

Please contact Mary Jo DeNolf at ctamthrives@gmail.com or maryjo@aact.org to let her know if you will be attending. Whether you're already an AACT member or simply curious about getting involved, you are warmly invited to join the conversation.

This is a space for everyone - established members and future members alike.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions, and we'll follow up soon with meeting details once the time is set.



Prez Says:

Sign up for your On The Road Workshop today!

By: CTAM President Chuck Goddeeris

CTAM's mission statement is short and sweet: We are here to help community theatre thrive in Michigan! We accomplish this mission primarily through educational programs, but also through other means as well (adjudication, collaboration, networking, etc). What I'd like to highlight is the biggest weapon in our education arsenal: On The Road (OTR) Workshops.

This year, our goal is to provide at least 10 of these OTR Workshops for our member organizations. An OTR is where WE pay to send a highly trained educator to your theatre to provide a hands-on workshop that is typically 2-4 hours long. These workshops can cover any subject your group desires. Whether that's a workshop on acting, auditioning, intimacy, marketing, social media, sound design, light design, fundraising, board development, set building, prop-making, directing, etc is entirely up to your group.

We have an extensive network of trained educators covering just about any topic you can think of that will help your theatre level up their skills. We just need you to let us know WHAT you need, and WHEN you need it. Then we coordinate matching the instructor to your schedule at VIRTUALLY NO COST to you.

All you have to do is email ctamthrives@gmail.com with that information and we'll get started right away on setting up your OTR.

Recognize your outstanding volunteers

Honor your volunteers with a CTAM nomination this year!

CTAM offers several annual 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 are available.

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.

Dorothy Arnett Volunteer Service Award

This award offers an opportunity for your group to have CTAM recognize your volunteers for long-term service within your group. This award is presented by CTAM to those individuals who have given valuable, longterm 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 may 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 theatre sparkle. [Click here to access the nomination form](#)

Member Theatre Group Shows - Support CTAM’s Amazing Member Productions

If your show or shows are missing from the list please contact our webmaster and we will remedy the situation as quickly as possible.

For a full list of our Member Theatres [please click here.](#)

Clarkston Village Players	The Play That Goes Wrong	May 1 – 16, 2026
Kalamazoo Civic Theatre	The Producers	May 1 – 17, 2026
Players Guild of Dearborn	Hairspray	May 1 – 17, 2026
Village Players of Birmingham	A Little Night Music	May 1 – 17, 2026
Pit and Balcony	The Last 5 Years	May 7 – 17, 2026
Livonia Community Theatre	By The Way, Meet Vera Stark	May 8 – 17, 2026
Tawas Bay Players	Moonglow	May 8 – 17, 2026
Kidz Theatre Company	Princess Whatshername*	May 8 – 17, 2026
Alpena Civic Theatre	Merry Christmas Grandpa	May 14 – 24, 2026
Circle Theatre	Forever Plaid	May 14 – 30, 2026
Tin Stop Theatre	Mothers and Sons	May 15 – 16, 2026
The Sauk	Riverfest Shakespeare	May 15 – 16, 2026
Old Town Playhouse	Four Old Broads	May 15 – 23, 2026
Community Theatre of Howell	40th Anniversary Gala & Performance	May 16, 2026
Avon Players Theatre	A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder	May 22 – June 6, 2026
Owosso Community Players	Musical Revue	May 28 – 31, 2026
Clarkston Village Players	Footlocker**	May 29 – 30, 2026
Vanishing Elephant Players	Mr. Burns: A Post Electric Play	May 29 – 31, 2026
Clio Cast and Crew	Aspirin & Elephants	May 29 – June 7, 2026
Stagecrafters	Newsies	May 29 – June 14, 2026

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