AACTFEST27 — IT'S OFFICIAL! MICHIGAN AACTFEST27 IS COMING TO MIDLAND, FEBRUARY 12–14, 2027!



The clock is ticking and the 2027 AACTFest cycle is getting closer and closer each day!

Michigan AACTFest27 is a month earlier than Michigan usually plans. Dates for the festival will be February 12 -14, 2027. So, bring your favorite valentines to Midland Michigan and participate in this fabulous weekend. Join us for a fantastic weekend filled with outstanding community theatre performances, educational workshops, networking opportunities, afterglows, and plenty of opportunities to connect with fellow theatre enthusiasts!

Deadline for groups: January 10, 2027
Group Registration:
$150 for up to 8 people
Any competing group over eight people can register additional company members for $25 each.
CTAM is aware of cost to compete and want to ensure we are working with everyone to keep costs down.
Form to register: https://ctam.ludus.com/200553141

Individual Registrations:
We have 3 levels of registrations for those who are coming to support your favorite theatre.
Early Bird: $70 (expires 12/31/26) link:
Regular: $80 (after 1/1/27)
VIP: $100 - support CTAM and have a special seat for each performance!
Individual Registration: https://ctam.ludus.com/200553144

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Community Theatre Association of Michigan

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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

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Hotel Informtion - Host Hotel will be the Holiday Inn Midland (810 Cinema Drive) We are working on details but room rates will be: Double Queen $132 plus tax. We are also working on the awards being at same hotel on Sunday, February 14 - 10am with a breakfast included. More information and a link to make room reservations to follow once contract has been signed.

Afterglows - Who can have a festival without Afterglows. We are working on a collaboration with Candle and Clock Brewatorium - just a couple blocks away from the theatre. CTAM checked it out while there during Fall Conference and it's great place to hang out, network and talk with friends.

Adjudicators - CTAM is proud to announce our Michigan AACTFest Adjudicators for the 2027 Fesitval
Kathy Pingel retired as Director of Education and Youth Programming for the Des Moines Community Playhouse after a distinguished career spanning theatre education, directing, and performance studies. She has directed more than 50 productions and has taught and directed throughout the United States and internationally, including Germany. A respected adjudicator for the American Association of Community Theatre (AACT), Kathy has taught the AACT Adjudication Seminar at multiple national festivals. She was named an AACT Fellow in 2017 and received the organizations prestigious Art Cole Lifetime Achievement Award in 2019. Along with Ron Ziegler, she received the Cloris Leachman Award for Best Direction for The Hobbit.

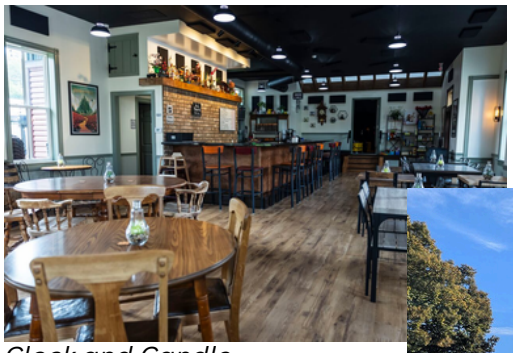

Kathy Pingel

Ron Ziegler recently retired as Festivals Coordinator for the American Association of Community Theatre following a career spanning more than 40 years. He has served as educator, director, producer, arts administrator, festival coordinator, and AACT President. Ron has adjudicated theatre festivals across the United States and internationally while directing productions in Iowa, South Dakota, Kentucky, Florida, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Germany. He is an AACT Fellow and received the Art Cole Lifetime Leadership Award in 2023. His production of Blackbird represented the United States at AACTWorldFest in 2022.


Ron Ziegler

David Gram - after serving as an adjudicator in 2025 in Bay City we are pleased to have David back once again for the Michigan festival. David is an Associate Professor of Directing and Acting at the Department of Theatre at Oakland University in Rochester Hills.


David Gram


Clock and Candle



AACT Site

Hotel



Beyond the Footlights: A CTAM Member Spotlight

Different stages. Different stories. One theatre community.

For nearly six decades, Ionia Community Theatre has been proving that the magic of live theater extends far beyond the stage. Since its founding in 1967, the organization has brought generations of performers, volunteers and audiences together, building a legacy rooted in creativity, collaboration and community spirit. From its humble beginnings with three one-act plays on the local Elks Ballroom stage to ambitious musicals and partnerships with the next generation of theater artists, Ionia Community Theatre has embraced both the challenges and rewards of community theater. As the group prepares to celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2027, its story offers a reminder that the greatest strength of community theater isn't found in elaborate sets or standing ovations, but in the people who come together to make it happen. CTAM asked Ionia Community Theatre a series of questions to dive deep into their history, their current productions and what's next.

Q: Tell us a little about your theater. What community do you serve, how long have you been around, and what makes your theater uniquely yours?
A: Ionia Community Theatre serves Ionia County and its surrounding areas. We were established in 1967. The longevity of our group is probably our most important aspect. We will celebrate 60 years in 2027.

Q: Beyond putting on shows, what do you believe your theater contributes to your community? What happens in your community because your theater exists?
A: Our members involve themselves in numerous community events as volunteers. The expertise we can provide in regards to things like music, lights, sound and costumes are much sought after; as well as just showing up as volunteers to man local events.

Q: Every theater has an origin story. What's yours? How did your theater get its start?
A: The primary driving force behind our initial organization was Ron Ferraro, formerly an announcer at the WION Radio Station. He was our first president. Ed Jenkins, a social worker at the Ionia State Hospital was our first director. He majored in drama as an undergraduate and taught high school dramatics for several years before going into social work. With Ed's enthusiasm and experience we started with a series of dramatic workshops that were open to the general public. As we gained a little skill and experience, we decided to broaden our horizons by putting on three one-act plays as our first production. In February of 1967 we performed, "The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife," "The Rising of the Moon," and "The Twelve Pound Look" on the Elks Ballroom stage.

Q: What's one thing your theater does particularly well that other community theaters might learn from? It could be a creative fundraising idea, volunteer recruitment strategy, audience engagement initiative, or an innovative approach to producing shows.
A: We work well together with our local Young People's Theatre and the Ionia High School Theatre Group. Some of our Board members represent these groups and there is much collaboration amongst the groups.

Q: Community theaters are masters at doing extraordinary things with limited resources. What's your favorite example of creative problem-solving?
A: In the 1970's, our long-time director, Spiro Mann saw the need for more male participation in our play productions. Since he was a member the local Rotary Club, he reached out to the club and we collaborated on several play productions together. Many of those members maintained long term relationships with ICT. Additionally, Mr. Mann was a member of the Elks Club and he utilized his membership to allow ICT as guests in their building for rehearsals and play productions on their small stage.

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Two photos from Ionia Community Theatre's production of "The Crucible" and a picture of their scarecrow entry from their recent downtown Autumn Celebration to promote their upcoming show, "Always . . . Patsy Cline."

CTAM BACKSTAGE MARKETPLACE

MUCH ADO ABOUT STUFF

One theater's closing night is another theater's opening night! Got costumes collecting dust, set pieces taking up space, or props waiting for their next starring role?

Buy, sell, swap, or share with fellow CTAM member theaters. Because the show must go on — and there's no reason we can't help each other make it happen!

LOOKING FOR SOUND GEAR?
Yamaha LS9-16 - $700/obo
PreSonus StudioLive 64S plus NSB 32.16, NSB 16.8 and Bridging Switch for $5,000 (this is a great starter digital mixer with 2 stageboxes and the networking switch to connect them all!)
4 x Audio Technica ATW-r3100 wireless mic kits (482.000 – 507.000 MHz)
Behringer X32 with rugged rolling travel case, used for literally one show, $1500

If interested contact Chuck Goddeeris at webmaster@ctam.online. If you're looking for something else for your sound or lights gear let me know as well as I can put you in touch with other great options.

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Q: Tell us about a time your team turned a challenge into a success through ingenuity, collaboration, or sheer theatrical determination.
A: Last summer, a group of students from the Ionia High School Theatre Group approached us, with their advisor asking us to produce a summer theater production of "The Crucible." Since school would not be in session, they couldn't do a summer theater production under their normal guidelines. They expressed their interest in doing a serious drama with our help. It was a student-led production with an age limit for actors and backstage crew with their high school advisor as producer and a student director.

Q: What is one production, moment, or audience reaction from your theater's history that reminds you why you do what you do?
A: In 2000, we did "Grease" for the first time. We built an extension of the stage (over some of the auditorium's seating) so we could have a 50's dance competition. We invited patrons to come in costume to participate in the competition.

Q: What is something your theater does that you think another community theater in Michigan could steal – in the best possible way? It could be a programming idea, volunteer strategy, fundraising approach, audience engagement idea, or simply something fun.
A: "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" is a fun one-night fundraising event that we have done a few times over the years. It includs a shadow cast competition and the sale of prop bags.

Q: Your theater gets one magical upgrade overnight. You can have unlimited money, volunteers, space or audience members but only choose one. What do you choose, and what would you do with it?
A: An auditorium of our own, with enough space to include a storage area for our costumes, props and furniture. A building of our own would speak volumes on how we could operate without scheduling conflicts and maintenance issues.

Q: If you could put every community theater in Michigan in a room together for one afternoon, what would you want them to talk about, share, or solve together?
A: Our group struggles with enough volunteers, particularly producers and directors. We need to figure out how to recruit and/or train people for these roles in order to produce more shows.

Q: What's next for your theatre, and what are you most excited about? Share an upcoming production, new initiative, ambitious dream, or exciting development. What should the rest of Michigan's theater community be watching for?
A: We are currently in production for the two-woman show, "Always . . . Patsy Cline," with dates to be determined in the early part of 2027. This is an ambitious show with challenging roles for Patsy and her biggest fan Louise Seger. It includes a live band, featuring 27 songs and numerous costume changes for Patsy. We hope to do it as a dinner theatre.

Q: Finish this sentence: "Michigan needs community theaters because . . ."
A: Michigan needs community theaters because sports aren't everything. The arts and particularly theater are an outlet for everyone to participate in. You don't have to be an actor or a singer; there are many aspects of theater to volunteer for. It could be backstage crew, costuming, make-up, building props or sets, helping out with concessions, working in the box office or being an usher, just to name a few. The opportunities to volunteer are endless.

2026 Playwriting Winners Announced

By Mary Lou Britton

The winners of the 2026 CTAM Playwriting contest were announced at the Fall Conference on Saturday, September 26, in Midland. These four plays are available to CTAM affiliate members for the next year, royalty-free. Contact the playwright directly or Playwriting Chair Mary Lou Britton at playwriting@ctam.online.

Full Length Plays

There is one winner in the full-length category this year. Out of 26 plays submitted, the judges selected *Barn Wood and Blue Roses by Jacquelyn Priskorn.* This is a play that pulls you to the very edge of fantasy but firmly planted in the real world. It calls for three young teenagers and several of their mothers. So, casting could be a concern unless you have a youth program that develops young talent. These are three significant roles that would tax even the most experienced of actors!

In their efforts to live a somewhat normal life with cystic fibrosis, Chelsea and her best friend, Devon, create an alternate world when Chelsea must undergo twice-daily breathing treatments wearing a bulky 'vest' to help her breathe and expel the problem phlegm. They imagine Devon becoming a dragon with wings for those treatment periods. With dragons, of course, come princesses, fairy gardens and roses, lots of roses! (In fact, cystic fibrosis is often called "Sixty-five roses")

All characters float easily back and forty between fantasy and reality – sometimes with costume pieces, but generally with just their acting ability and voice changes. Staging can be simplified with moveable set pieces that the actors can slide around as the scene calls for change. The play is available royalty-free for one year by contacting the author, Jacquelyn Priskorn, at jacquiejfloyd@gmail.com.

Ten Minute Plays

We had 13 plays submitted in this category and the judges have selected the top three winners.

What's the Score? Who's Winning? Written by Arlene Pollock, Ex-spouses meet at a Little League game, quite to each other's surprise. Old wounds surface and a foul-ball catches everyone's attention.

Waiting for Waiting For Godot. Written by Dan Woitulewicz Two actors arrive way too early and must wait in the green room for their chance to audition for Waiting for Godot.

The Ticket. Written by Pete DiSante With dreams of winning the lottery, John and Shelly begin celebrating maybe a little too early.



Jacquelyn Priskorn



Pete DiSante



Dan Woitulewicz



Arlene Pollock

"The most important thing about acting is honesty. If you can fake that, you've got it made." — George Burns

Member Theatre Group Shows

Fenton Village Players	*Sleepy Hollow*	November 14 - 21, 2026
Muskegon Civic Theatre	*It's a Wonderful Life*	November 20 - December 6, 2026
Holland Community Theatre	*Just in the Nick of Time*	November 27 - December 12, 2026
Kalamazoo Civic	*Wizard of Oz*	November 27 - December 20, 2026
The Sauk	*Little Women*	December 3 - 13. 2026
Lapeer Community Theatre	*A Christmas Carol*	December 4 - 6, 2026
Southgate Community Players	*A Christmas Story*	December 4 - 12, 2026
Bay City Players	*The Land of the Forgotten Toys*	December 4 - 13, 2026
Clio Cast and Crew	*A Christmas Story*	December 4 - 13, 2026
Flint Community Players	*James and the Giant Peach*	December 4 - 13, 2026
Gratiot County Players	*Crash & Burns*	December 4 - 13, 2026
Lebowsky Center for Performing Arts	*Holiday at Lebowsky*	December 4 - 13, 2026
WE Players	*Holiday Channel Christmas Movie Wonderthon*	December 4 - 13, 2026
Old Town Playhouse	*Charlie & the Chocolate Factory*	December 4 - 19, 2026
Grosse Pointe Theatre	*White Christmas*	December 4 - 20, 2026
Twin City Players	*Prancer*	December 4 - 20, 2026
Community Theatre of Howell	*A Christmas Carol*	December 11 - 13, 2026
Central Park Players	*A Christmas Story*	December 11 - 20, 2026
Monroe Community Players	*A Krampus Carol*	December 11 - 20, 2026
Tin Shop Theatre	*Scrooge! Interrupted*	December 18 - 20, 2026

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.

Proud Member of aact AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY THEATRE

MICHIGAN ARTS & CULTURE COUNCIL

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT for the ARTS arts.gov