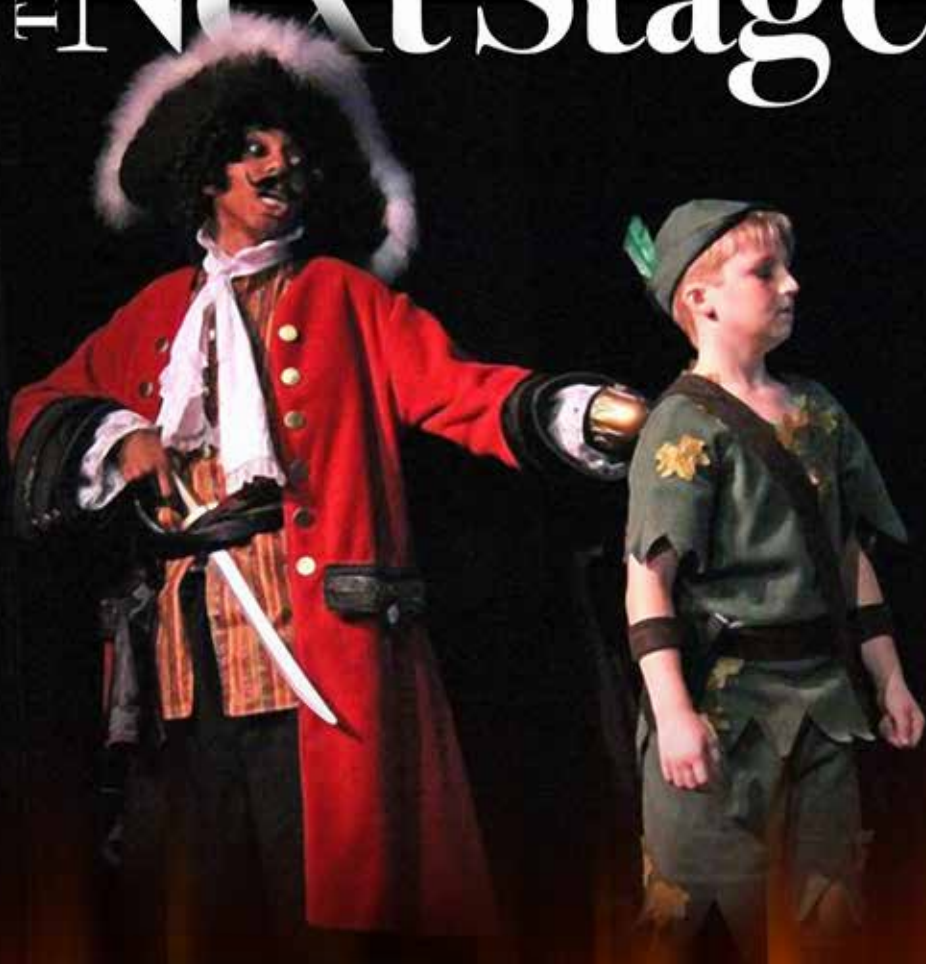


THE **MP** **THE**
MANSFIELD
PLAYHOUSE

THE Next Stage



**Wertz couple leads
Playhouse 'family'**

**Creating theater magic
on East Third**

**Building the next stage
on 100th Anniversary**





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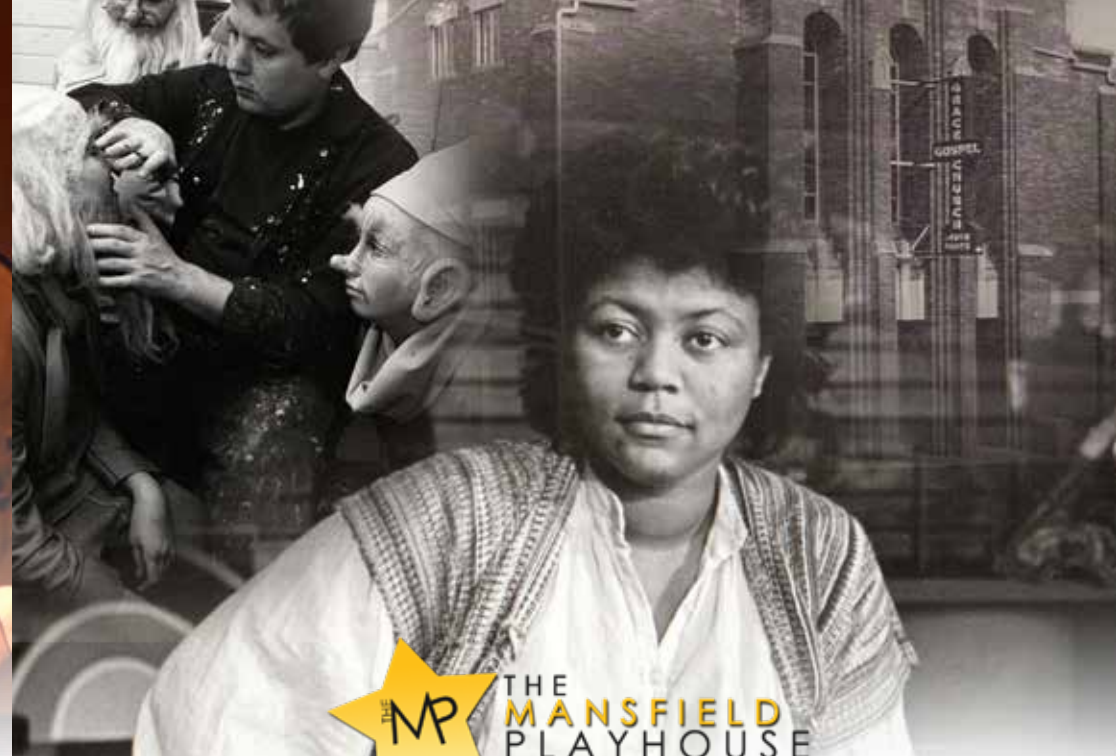
On the cover, scene from 'Peter Pan' and Playhouse Artistic Director Doug Wertz

Pledge Your Gift to Support Our Mission

The Mansfield Playhouse, building on its legacy as Ohio's second oldest continuously producing community theater, provides a variety of affordable theatrical experiences on both sides of the curtain. The Playhouse organization is dedicated to achieving the highest quality in all it does, enriching and educating audiences and volunteers, and reaching beyond the walls of the Playhouse to embrace all elements of the Mansfield area community.

Doug Wertz
President-Artistic Director, Mansfield Playhouse
95 E. Third St., Mansfield, Ohio 44902
419.522.2883

Chriss Harris
100th Anniversary Campaign Director
419.610.3182



Building the Next Stage Together



THE MANSFIELD PLAYHOUSE

One Hundred Years

Charismatic Couple Leads the Playhouse 'Family'



As teenagers growing up in different states, Doug and Tammy Wertz worked behind and in front of the curtain at their respective playhouses in Mansfield, Ohio, and Warsaw, Ind., embracing their community theatre families. Together, they work magic in this cultural arts organization celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2025.

Tammy moved to Mansfield in 1992 from Warsaw and completed her degree in psychology at OSU-Mansfield. She worked in group homes while earning her college degree and later worked as a children's librarian.

Playhouse President/Artistic Director Doug and Theatre Manager Tammy love the Playhouse and its current theatre setting, but the show must go on. Their building is surrendering to age.

Doug is a Mansfield native who made a living building houses, selling pumps and advertising, and acting in summer stock theater. Tammy volunteered as a Mansfield Playhouse choreographer while raising the couple's children, then took the Playhouse theatre manager job 13 years ago. Married for 29 years, they have four children (Doug has two by a previous marriage) and eight grandchildren.

During their years of setting the direction and pace as the only paid employees of the Mansfield Playhouse, the Wertz's experiences and talents in leadership,

management, marketing, sales, acting, choreography, and music have charmed audiences and their theatre volunteer families.

They spend so much time at the Playhouse off East Third Street in downtown Mansfield that it almost seems like they live there. In fact, they unloaded 300 gently used theater seats from a truck in the rain on their 25th wedding anniversary.

The couple is a perfect team and a winning one: The Mansfield Playhouse was recently named 2023 Small Business of the Year by the Richland Area Chamber of Commerce. Doug builds sets, fixes what is broken, raises money to support operations, leads projects, and directs and acts in performances, while Tammy handles the bookkeeping, scheduling, ticket sales, promotions, and much more.

The Wertz's have 300 volunteers to help, from actors, ticket booth workers, and stagehands to board members and sound and lighting technicians. The Wertz's children and many parents of young actors and lifelong performers often join the production crew as well.

Doug, Tammy, and their team at the Mansfield Playhouse produce nine shows a year while comedians, recording artists, and other performers rent the stage. The Wertz's and their trustees and volunteers are the organization's backbone, a family of friends who are captivated by live theater.



Using the 'ordinary' creates theater magic

“ People often ask us where we 'rented' something. We love to tell them that we and the volunteers make it ourselves. The 'Lion King' masks were made from cutting out a pattern and using paper mache, bamboo blinds and paint (and a LOT of hours).

“Costumes are always created by our AMAZING costume makers! We paint every stage floor. Even the plants used in 'Little Shop of Horrors' were hand made. The cost of renting anything is outrageous for our budget, so we need to be creative.

“We spend VERY little money by using every day, ordinary things. It is one of the greatest strengths of this organization and something in which we are enormously proud. ”

— Tammy Wertz, Theatre Manager



Keeping Playhouse Tradition Alive for a Century

The Community Players burst onto the Mansfield scene in 1925, laying the foundation for what would become the vibrant Mansfield Playhouse. In the early days, producing three shows each year, what was then called the "little theatre" showcased local talents at John Simpson Junior High School, honed the actors' skills in a cozy room above the Leland Hotel garage, built eye-catching sets at West First Street School, and wowed audiences with the group's annual Starlight Revue at Kingwood Center.

A pivotal moment came in 1966 when the First Alliance Church vacated its building at 95 E. Third Street. This opened the door for the Playhouse to make the space its home, where it has continued to shine for nearly 60 years.



In 1967, in its new theatre, the Playhouse celebrated a thrilling milestone with its inaugural production of "Brigadoon!" The Playhouse crew was all set with used theater seats from Youngstown, Ohio, but a twist of fate had the seats arriving late.

So, the audience ended up sitting in church pews, adding a quirky touch to that first evening performance in the former church building. The Playhouse also snagged drapes and chandeliers from the downtown Leland Hotel, which had graciously sold tickets for their shows in those early years until right before the hotel was demolished in 1976.

The Mansfield Playhouse has presented various kinds of plays, from light-hearted comedies and classic musicals to gripping dramas and contemporary works. Performances have been classics like "It's a Wonderful Life" and "The Little Mermaid" to provocative plays such as "Death Trap" and "Caught in the Net." The Playhouse also helps local talent by putting on plays written by people from the Mansfield area. This mix of plays has kept the Playhouse an important part of the community, with something for everyone to enjoy.

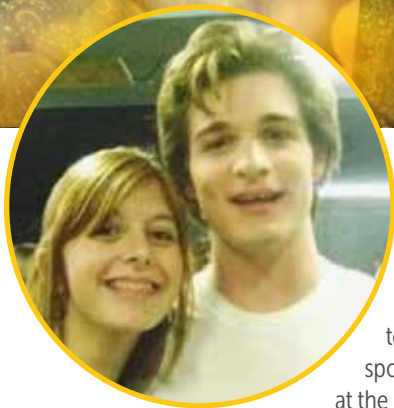
Throughout the Mansfield Playhouse's rich history, its purpose hasn't wavered in providing entertainment and encouraging the advancement of theater as art. Importantly, it also provides opportunities for the cultural, technical, and educational growth of its actors, volunteers, and others through experiences in live theater.



From Playhouse Stage to Married Life



Meet Victoria and Daniel O'Brien



By Carl Hunnell, Mansfield Playhouse Actor/Volunteer City Editor, Source Media Group

Daniel and Victoria O'Brien have performed together as spouses on stage at the Mansfield Playhouse. That's a

fitting casting decision since the real-life husband-and-wife team would never have met – much less married – if not for the historic community theatre on Third Street in Mansfield.

Now in their early 30s, the Mansfield Playhouse was a great place to meet – and incubate a relationship – for the home-schooled student from Ontario (Daniel) and the teenager from Willard (Victoria) in Huron County, about a half hour away.

Community theater is a safe place for people of all ages to meet and work together and develop long-lasting friendships – especially for teenagers who found out they already shared a common love.

"We were both developing our love for theater a little bit," Victoria said. "We see it a lot in the youth (shows) now when we volunteer here. It's such an exciting time when you are figuring out who you are and for those of us who get bitten by the theater bug.

"The theater can be such a place of learning and growth and just making like-minded friends. Especially for people like me, coming from a small town where maybe the arts aren't as prioritized or like (Daniel) coming from a home-school background," said 31-year-

old Victoria, who works as an academic advisor at Ashland University.

Doug Wertz, the president/ artistic director of the Playhouse and the facility's only full-time employee, also met his wife, Tammy, through the local theatre. She is now the manager of the Playhouse.

"Tammy and I first became friends through meeting at the Mansfield Playhouse. The opportunity to meet new people, network, learn from one another and teach one another is all about building with one another here at the Playhouse," he said.

Victoria and Daniel, who had come across one another in other shows, developed a stronger friendship during a main-stage performance of "Annie".

Daniel said he grew up watching his siblings perform at the Playhouse, but he didn't get the theater bug until he performed in a show at The Ohio State-Mansfield when he was 16 years old.

"I was interested in music, but I'd never put myself out there really at that point, being homeschooled, as well as being involved in other activities, jobs, and things like that.

"After that first show, I was like, 'I want to do more' and the Playhouse was going to be perfect. So, I auditioned for 'Annie,'" Daniel said.

Daniel, a year older than Victoria and now an elections specialist at the Richland County Board of Elections, was cast in the adult show and Victoria was working backstage.

"We were like the only teens, because it was grownups in the cast and then little girls. There weren't that many people in our age bracket," she said.

"I was nervous to talk to him. He was always set apart from other teenage boys because he was always wearing a shirt and a jacket ... dressed very dapper," Victoria said.

"We weren't on stage all the time," Daniel said. "So, when we weren't on stage, we would be backstage. And we would be talking and flirting ... during rehearsals, not during productions," he said with a laugh.

One of the nice things about the run-up to a Mansfield Playhouse performance is a six-week rehearsal period – more than enough time for cast and crew to interact with each other. Victoria and Daniel took advantage of that time as teenagers.

"We just had good conversations. We've always loved to laugh. We're both very sarcastic and we were similar in a lot of ways, but different, and kind of quirky," Victoria said.

The two were cast as husband and wife in the show "Mousetrap" in early 2020 at the Playhouse. "I think we had two

rehearsals before everything was shut down (COVID pandemic)," Victoria said. "We actually don't do shows together very often because it's a lot of evening commitment and it's really hard when you and your spouse are both doing it because there's nobody at home making dinner," she said with a laugh.

"We kind of take turns, but once in a while we both really want to be in something together," Victoria said. "And that's also really special in its own way," she said.

Fortunately, the COVID shutdown didn't last forever, and "Mousetrap" was staged about four months later.

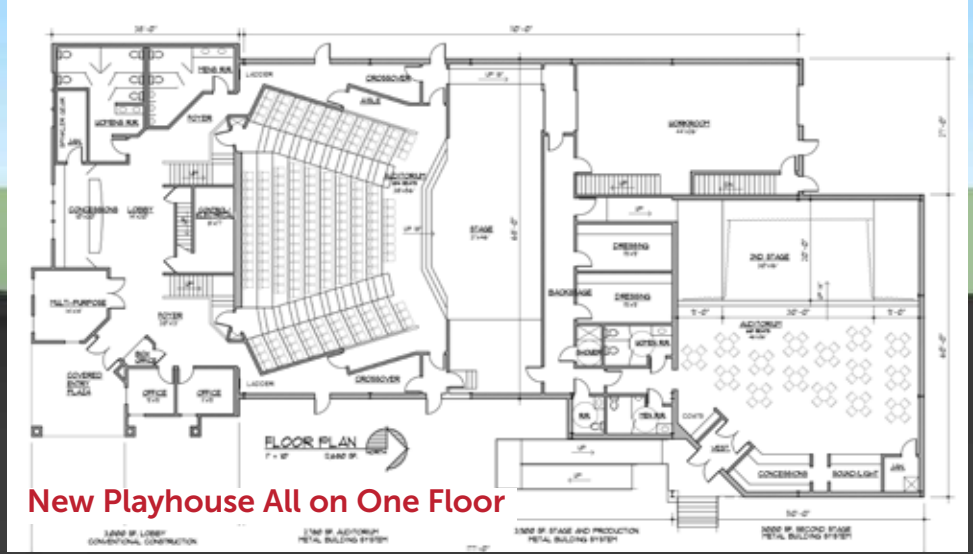
Today, after nine years of marriage, the husband-and-wife team have their off-stage, real-life dialogue, lovingly finishing each other's sentences. When they perform together today, do they recall moments from that initial show that brought them together at the Playhouse?

"Absolutely. Even today, like when we're here at the theatre together, it's special," Daniel said. Victoria laughed, "Like when we're sitting on the stairs behind the stage. It's dark. Just whispering and talking."

"That's one thing I am going to miss about this (current Playhouse) building. It will be hard to let go because it's a place that's got so many memories."



Building the Next Stage Together



New Playhouse All on One Floor

First Capital Campaign Underway for Century-old Mansfield Playhouse

The Mansfield Playhouse, once known as Mansfield Little Theatre and The Community Players, is celebrating its 100th Anniversary in 2025 as the second oldest continuously producing community theater in Ohio, the largest producing company in the state, and among the oldest community theaters in the United States.

Because the Mansfield Playhouse's current building is quite old and the Playhouse's historian architect believes it's beyond repair, a new Mansfield Playhouse will be built without losing the charm of the old one.

The forward-thinking leaders and board members of the Mansfield Playhouse, with help from a special donor, recently purchased a parking lot next door to the East Third Street theatre. This space will be the home of the new Mansfield Playhouse. The old East Third Street building, a former church that the theatre group purchased in 1966 that is across from the Mansfield Police Department, will be torn down for a new parking lot.

The Playhouse leaders and trustees have no choice but to build a new building. With over 9,000 annual ticket holders who have visited the area from as far away as California and Washington, the Playhouse organization is simply too valuable to the community to allow it to fail because of an unrepairable, aging building that is not accessible for all.

The Playhouse's current building is not easy to navigate for those with mobility issues (like those using canes, walkers, wheelchairs and more) because there are steps everywhere. Given that the Playhouse believes in embracing everyone in the Mansfield area community, it is not acceptable to be in a building that is not accessible to all.

The total cost of the project is \$7.5 million. This includes pre-construction expenses, construction of the new building, demolition of the old building, and a new parking lot. The new building will include a small theater and large theater (same as offered today but in much needed new, accessible space), electrical, water/sanitary and HVAC systems, theater sound and lighting, and other components necessary for live theater performances.

The first ever major capital fundraising campaign for the Playhouse is underway for this project that, when complete, will continue the Playhouse's tradition of quality productions and acting, education and training in drama and the performing arts, and affordable ticket prices. It will also provide a welcoming atmosphere for

newcomers, volunteers, and all others who visit the family theatre.

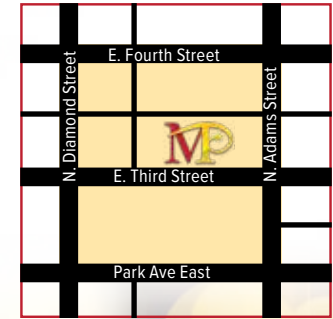
The campaign is called the 100th Anniversary Capital Campaign. The new building will be the first major construction project in downtown Mansfield in more than three decades and spur development in its "neighborhood".

New Building May Anchor New Playhouse District

The area surrounding the Mansfield Playhouse properties, including two storage and workshop buildings, may be called the Playhouse District. Like the Carousel and Imagination districts in downtown Mansfield, the new Playhouse District would

encompass certain properties in a zone of streets and buildings. This Playhouse District zone would be from Diamond Street east to Adams Street and East Fourth Street south to Park Avenue East. An announcement on this new downtown "district"

will be made in 2025. Creating this new district would further identify a significant development growth "block" in Mansfield that would be anchored by the new Playhouse.



Monetary gifts and gift pledges may be sent to the Mansfield Playhouse, 95 E. Third St., Mansfield, Ohio 44902 or via the Playhouse's website at mansfieldplayhouse.com. Gifts of stock are also an option, and details on stock gifts are available from Campaign Director Chriss Harris at 419.610.3182.

‘Every Play Is a Favorite’



By Doug Wertz
Playhouse President-Artistic Director

"What's your favorite play?" I'm often asked. The more I think about the shows that the Mansfield Playhouse produces, whether it be a comedy, thriller, classic drama, or children's musical, the harder it is to answer that question.

At the end of every production, our volunteers, actors, and attendees often hear us say, "This is one of our favorite shows." We say that because there are new lessons that come from each experience. A different script and story. The challenge of coming up with unique ideas for designs while dealing with tight budgets. The people who take on the challenge of new character roles and highlight the psychology of those characters to tell an engaging story.

Many of these shows teach us valuable life lessons if we ask ourselves, "How can we bring the best story forward?"

Take the story of "Moana", for example. Here we learn about the destructive

impact that greed and power have on all of us. We learn that when something deeply valuable is stolen, it tears away the love from the soul of its true owner. But when this item is returned, we feel the overwhelming feelings of forgiveness and passion and the satisfaction that comes from "doing the right thing."

One play that deeply touched my heart is called "The Boys Next Door." It's a story about mentally challenged adult men in a group home who are supervised by a burned-out caretaker. The antics of the "boys" make us laugh as we see their silliness, their immature mentality, their poor decision-making, and their confusion when faced with real-life situations.

But there is much more to their stories. Their upbringing, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and mental illness all reveal a deeper story that teach the audience that mental illness is real and can happen to anyone at any time. It's an incredibly heartwarming story that shows us how funny and, at the same time, tragic life can be.

On the other hand, there are the villains. The most relatable villains often have flaws that all of us have, such as narcissism, greed, and desire. We all know and deal with them and yet, when the heart, morals, values, and honesty hold their form, the antagonist either learns the lesson or his/her demise soon follows. A fitting example of this happens in the age-old classic story "A Christmas Carol".

This is why each show can become, and often is, a favorite. We love showing the audience the empathy, compassion, love, and guidance that often wins at the end of the day. And we especially love giving them an incredible entertainment experience that gives them thought-provoking lessons to take home.





Playhouse Offers Fun, Creative Space for Young Performers

The Mansfield Playhouse youth theatre is a hub of creativity and inclusiveness, helping young talent flourish through its enriching theatrical productions. This program has been growing, attracting between 70 to 120 children who audition for each production. The Playhouse puts on several youth productions every year, including two musicals, providing costumes, and allowing every child to fully immerse themselves in their roles at no direct cost to families.

Inclusivity and diversity are at the heart of the Playhouse's mission. The program welcomes children from various schools and backgrounds, fostering a community where everyone feels valued. The Playhouse also finds roles for autistic children and those with disabilities, as possible, helping them thrive through their performances. Many children enter the program as strangers and leave with lifelong friendships.

Since its inception in the 1970s, the Mansfield Playhouse youth theater has provided invaluable live theater experiences, promoting growth and development for its young participants. Through this learning process, children acquire valuable skills such as public speaking, teamwork, and creative thinking. They return year after year, leaving with newfound confidence, compassion, empathy, and responsibility.

The Playhouse's youth program is its most rewarding initiative, instilling in participants a deep appreciation for the arts and exposing children to diverse cultural narratives and storytelling techniques.



The success stories emerging from the youth theatre are plentiful. Alumni have gone on to become successful playwrights, composers, and producers. Some have utilized their technical and lighting experience for road shows or running successful companies, while others have graced Broadway as choreographers and performers. Notably, Jenni Barber, who began her career as a child actor at the Mansfield Playhouse, has become a renowned Broadway actor, having starred in several productions, including the role of Glinda in "Wicked".

The opportunities provided to youth at the Mansfield Playhouse are truly endless, making it a cornerstone of the theatre and an essential program for cultivating the next generation of artistic talent.



THE MANSFIELD PLAYHOUSE

One Hundred Years

Please use this pledge form to make your gift and return it to The Mansfield Playhouse.

We highly value your support.



Gift of \$ _____ Check enclosed and payable to The Mansfield Playhouse,
95 East Third Street, Mansfield, Ohio 44902

Gift of \$ _____ Payable over three years (by 12/1/25, 12/1/26, 12/1/27)

Charge my: Visa MasterCard Am Express

Name on card _____ Card number _____

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Signature _____ Date _____

Enhancing Community Safety Through the Arts

The Mansfield Playhouse has a rich history of collaborating with various local organizations to enhance community engagement and support diverse initiatives. One of the most unique and impactful is its role in preparing local police and sheriff's department personnel, as well as security and correctional officers, for some of the toughest situations they may face.

The Playhouse has partnered with the Richland County Mental Health & Recovery Services Board and the National Alliance on Mental Illness to host Crisis Intervention Team training for law enforcers and other first responders.

This innovative program integrates the arts with essential public safety training, providing officers with realistic scenarios where Playhouse actors use improvisation to portray individuals experiencing mental health crises. These scenarios cover a range of critical issues, including drug addictions, parole/probation violations, mental health issues, and domestic violence.

Since 2004, Richland County has trained more than 640 law enforcement officers and first responders through this program. The impact of these life-saving techniques helps officers gain invaluable experience in de-escalation and crisis management. The training sessions are designed to help officers handle a variety of complex situations, from dealing with individuals wielding weapons to resolving hostage scenarios.

By providing a safe and controlled environment for police and others to practice these skills, the Mansfield Playhouse plays a crucial role in enhancing community safety and well-being. The use of theater in this way highlights the versatility and importance of the arts in everyday life.

The Mansfield Playhouse's commitment to community collaboration and innovative training programs exemplifies its dedication to not only enriching the cultural fabric of the region but also fostering a safer, more responsive community.



Thank You

100TH ANNIVERSARY CAPITAL CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY SPONSORS



AND SPECIAL THANKS TO

Mary K. Dare Mary and Rand Smith



Members of the Mansfield Playhouse Board of Trustees include (back row) Glen Ring, Amy McNary, Nanci Keinath, Eric Gustafon, and (front row) Johnna Gustafson, Victoria O'Brien, Heidi Ankrum, and Doug Wertz. Joe Olecki is also a Playhouse trustee.