

WHS' All-Inclusive 'MAY-HEM' Promises Something for Everyone

By BETSEY BURGENDORF
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD—The Westfield Theatre Guild (Guild), an organization created to help support the Westfield High School Theatre Department, will host the second annual "MAY-HEM" on Saturday, May 12, at 7 p.m. in the Westfield High School (WHS) auditorium.

"MAY-HEM" is a variety show style production that offers any student with a desire to perform the opportunity to showcase their talent. No audition is required.

"Approximately 100 kids are involved," said Westfield Theatre Guild co-founder Ann Cary, who also acts as an advisor for the show. "It's an opportunity for kids who like performing to do what they like to do. They don't have to be the best."

"Before 'MAY-HEM,' the students who wanted to sing and dance in a non-competitive way really had no opportunity to perform on the main stage of the high school," Ms. Cary said. "'MAY-HEM' allows these students a creative outlet. During the year, the school presents the fall drama and the spring musical and now the kids have a third opportunity to perform. I have been involved with the drama department since my son, William, who is now a junior, was in the sixth grade and I love the camaraderie and support these kids show each other. When the spring musical ends, they are all a little sad and now they have an additional forum to perform anything they want in May."

WHS students Asher Horowitz,

Claire Dorwart, Emma Tabachnick, Lydia Oquendo and Rob Cassie serve as student production coordinators.

"Apart from the obvious goal of raising funds for the [Westfield] Theatre Guild, and getting an array of kids on stage, it's all about friendship and having fun," Claire, a junior who acts as the Art Work Coordinator and Student Liaison, told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times*. She will also be performing a musical number this year.

Lydia, a junior who is the stage manager for "MAY-HEM" stated she is responsible for organizing all the meetings and rehearsals and making sure that everyone is "on task."

Lisa Smelkinson, president and co-founder of the Guild, as well as production coordinator for "MAY-HEM" said, "It's an opportunity for kids, not just those who audition for productions, but additional children who don't always get to showcase their talents."

"MAY-HEM" did not start out as a fundraiser. It accidentally became one because the community was so generous at our show last year," Ms. Smelkinson told *The Leader* and *The Times*. "MAY-HEM" was developed as a way to fulfill our goal of providing additional performance opportunities to all interested students at Westfield High School."

Any monies raised through "MAY-HEM" will be used towards fulfilling a drama department "wish list" requested by the Guild each year. "During our first full year of operation, through the generosity of the community, the Guild was able to fulfill 'wishes' for nine new spotlights and for sound equipment including microphones, transmitters and sound cards totaling \$11,000," Ms. Smelkinson said.

This equipment is used for all Fine Arts programs that take place on the WHS stage. Financial support from the Guild helps supplement the Westfield School District's Fine Arts budget. Additionally, the Guild raises funds through an annual Back-To-School appeal, which is included in a mailing sent out to parents/guardians at the high school.

"Our hope is to create more performance opportunities in the coming year," Ms. Smelkinson said. "Some ideas we have discussed include a singing car wash, dinner theatre and a theatre festival for one-act plays."

Approximately 50 acts will take the stage during "MAY-HEM" this year. "Double what we had last year and almost 100 students participating as performers and behind-the-scenes sup-



TOTAL MAYHEM...The Westfield Theatre Guild will host the second annual "MAY-HEM" on Saturday, May 12, at 7 p.m. in the Westfield High School auditorium. Pictured, Westfield High School students involved in "MAY-HEM," a non-competitive variety show style production. Tickets are \$5 per student, \$10 per adult and can be purchased at the door. For more information, contact westfieldtheatreguild@gmail.com.

port," stated Ms. Smelkinson. "We have singers, dancers, rock bands, klezmer music, an accordion player, Irish dancing and monologues. I describe it as an all-inclusive, non-judged variety show."

Performers "run the gamut" with several leads from WHS musicals who will perform. "We also have our 'shower singers'—students who might not be participants in stage productions or school choral or instrumental groups," Ms. Smelkinson added.

Students who are singers, pianists and guitarists have approached one another in order to form acts Ms. Smelkinson stated. "It is wonderful to see students who don't know one another, seeking each other out and getting to know one another over their shared love of performing."

Ms. Smelkinson noted that each student brings their own particular skill set and personality to the production. "It has been an amazing experience to work with these students and to see their sense of ownership and pride in a show that is truly their own," she said. "Our enthusiastic student audience is also part of what makes our show so special."

Tickets are \$5 per student, \$10 per adult and can be purchased at the door.

For more information, contact westfieldtheatreguild@gmail.com.



SIGN OF GRATITUDE...St. Paul's Day School kindergarteners display an American flag they made and mailed to Lt. Daniel McGrory in Afghanistan. Daniel, a 2006 graduate of Westfield High School and a 2010 graduate of West Point, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Kevin McGrory. Pictured are Betsy Belden and Barbara Partinope with St. Paul's kindergarten students.

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