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Westfield Community Players Examine Loyalty and Friendship in *Regrets Only*

By SUSAN M. DOUGHERTY
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — In *Regrets Only*, the Westfield Community Players (WCP) theatre invites the audience to the “wedding of the year.” Parents Jack and Tibby McCullough, (William Chamis and Joan Hoffman) find that during the journey of their daughter Spencer’s (Judy Wilson) betrothal, there are many bumps in the road causing a detour to happiness.

Wealthy socialite Tibby is ready for a night of charity ball hopping with her lifelong friend, and gay fashion designer Hank Hadley (Ed Faver), a character loosely based on legendary designer Bill Blass. Hank’s male companion of almost 40 years has died in the last six months, which causes Hank to re-evaluate his life. He is saddened to think that his partner’s last words were

to ask Hank to marry him.

That same night, Tibby’s husband, Jack, a constitutional lawyer, comes home with exciting news — he has been tapped by President George W. Bush to go to Washington, D.C. to draft a Constitutional amendment defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman. McCullough’s daughter, Spencer, a lawyer herself, who just that evening became engaged, decides to join her father on the Washington trip.

From there, Jack, Tibby and Hank examine their relationship and the importance of loyalty and friendship.

A lively second act sets in motion all sorts of crazy situations, which happen the day before Spencer’s wedding. On designer Hank’s urging, the gay community in NYC goes on strike to understandably catastrophic results. A spoiled Spencer throws a tantrum when no



Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader and The Times
DIFFICULT DILEMMA... Jack McCullough (Bill Chamis) and Hank Hadley (Ed Faver) argue with socialite Tibby McCullough (Joan Hoffman) over weighty issues in Paul Rudnick’s *Regrets Only*. The show runs weekends through the end of January.

florists, dressmakers, or hairstylists are at her beck and call for her wedding.

Tibby’s mother, Marietta Claypoole, (Marguerite Wurtz) makes quite an entrance in the second act dressed like a homeless person because the dressmaker’s staff is on strike. Marietta is beside herself because of the gays’ fashion boycott, but tells her daughter and granddaughter of an even greater horror: not being able to see a Broadway matinee because all of the shows are cancelled since the casts have called out as well.

The concept of the gay community going on strike to shut down the world and make us appreciate and recognize them might have had promise for laughs years ago, but it almost seems ludicrous today. Playwright Rudnick’s one-dimensional characters behave in unrealistic ways, so it is difficult to become fully involved with them or feel much empathy for their situation. The

issue of gay marriage is a contentious, weighty one. Unfortunately, playwright Rudnick can not seem to decide if this is a comedy or a serious drama.

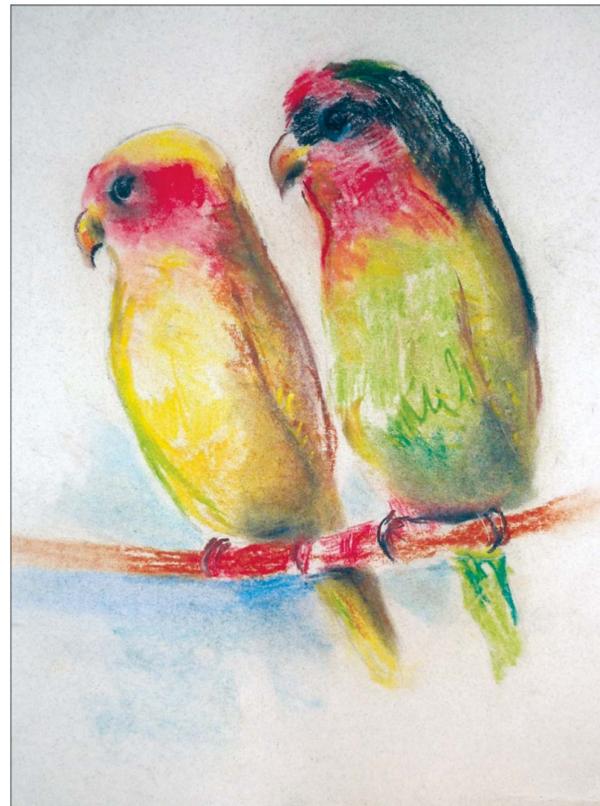
And that’s the problem with the play. Oh yes, there are moments of great silliness and fun that the cast squeezes out of the script, but the aspect of the deeper questions are swept under the three-inch carpet of the McCullough’s Park Avenue apartment.

Friendship is tested in this play, but not with convincing results. Perhaps it is because Hank himself is ambivalent about his own closeted relationship with his deceased partner, Mike. They never married because Hank did not feel the need.

Ms. Wilson’s character of Spencer questions him: Were they faithful to each other? Did they have a committed relationship? Ultimately she raises the question: what constitutes a marriage,

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Arts & Entertainment



ART FROM THE HEART...The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders will present an exhibit of artworks from the “Art from the HEART” fine arts program. The exhibition is a partnership between The Visual Arts Center of New Jersey and Sage Eldercare in Summit. The Freeholders Gallery is located on the 6th floor of the Union County Administration Building, Elizabethtown Plaza, Elizabeth. Gallery hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. The exhibit will run through Friday, January 31. Above is a painting by Walter Grossman entitled “My Little Birds.”



Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader and The Times
LAST MINUTE WEDDING BLUES... Marietta Claypoole (Marguerite Wurtz) adjusts the veil of her granddaughter Spencer (Judy Wilson) in *Regrets Only*, a Paul Rudnick play that opened at the Westfield Community Players’ theatre last weekend. Maid Myra (Leslie Riccio) has plenty of scenes to steal in the show that highlights some of the pitfalls that can happen on the way to the altar.

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Priya R. Patel, M.D., MPH

Dr. Patel joins the group from a private practice in Philadelphia. She attended Stony Brook University and trained at the prestigious Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. She received her Master of Public Health at Columbia University, continued her training in Pennsylvania as a fellow in minimally invasive gynecological procedures and published multiple research articles. Dr. Patel specializes in minimally invasive alternatives to surgery and speaks Gujarati and medical/conversational Spanish.

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