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Every Home...Every Week

Open Fields brings orphan 'Annie' to life



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Aspiring young actresses get ready for next weekend's production of "Annie", which is being presented by local community theatre company Open Fields.

BY ABIGAIL DAVIDSON
Hometown Weekly Staff

A Broadway star, professional musicians, and dozens of aspiring young actors and actresses all call the Open Fields Community Theatre home, which is exactly what

Dover resident, visionary, and Artistic Founder Keith Greenfield had in mind when he founded the small community theatre company for children back in 1999.

After years of being involved in commu-

nity theatre productions which centered around adults, Greenfield finally decided to spread his wings and create a stage that had a spotlight solely for children.

'ANNIE'

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"Open Fields is an organization that I founded about nine years ago with my wife," recalls Greenfield. "It's a community theatre group that is built as a safe haven for children to develop a passion for acting, singing and dance, but also to develop interpersonal relationships that have lasted a lifetime."

Not only does Greenfield emphasize children at his community theatre, but also families.

Greenfield works to ensure that each production brings youngsters together from all across the region, from his hometown of Dover and neighboring Sherborn, all the way out to Norwood and Boston, to share their love for acting. Older brothers and sisters encourage their younger siblings to get involved with Open Fields, parents help out with set and costume design, and in the end, the cast and crew of each production has truly become a family.

For Greenfield, creating Open Fields was a bonding experience for his own family, as it brought his four children, his wife Tina, and himself all together on the same stage.

"I had the desire to create an opportunity or a theatre system for kids who wanted this (acting) to be a part of their life," explains Greenfield. "I also wanted to share a family activity, I had four young kids at the time and this was something we could all enjoy at the time."

Nine years later, Open Fields is an extremely successful community theatre that puts on two performances per year, one main stage musical and one musical review that Greenfield writes himself. Next weekend, Open Fields will kick start their 2008 season with "Annie", the musical about everyone's favorite orphan.

For Greenfield, bringing a musical like Annie to the Mudge Auditorium at Dover-Sherborn High School is a dream come true, not only because it has oodles of opportunities for young performers, but also because it gives the youngest stars a chance to shine.

"I've wanted to do Annie for years," explains Greenfield. "The demographic of a young children's theatre group tends to be lots of girls between the ages of third and ninth grade and for that demographic, Annie is the ideal musical of choice."

Not only has the cast of Annie transformed into their own family of young orphans, many of the performers on stage are related.

"There's a lot of group moments where there's real life dads on stage with their daughters and real life moms with their sons. We also have siblings singing together. We're a giant Hallmark card here, but it's lasted almost half a generation," says Greenfield laughing.

The cast of Annie brings some of Open Fields' youngest stars (main-

ly girls in grades four through six) to the front of the stage, while older performers take the supporting roles. Additionally, child-star Katherine Doherty, hot off her run as Jane Banks in the Broadway version of "Mary Poppins", will be playing the role of Annie.

However, Greenfield feels that what really makes the show sparkle, is the effort that the more than 100 member cast has put into bringing Annie alive.

"This show is an incredible community effort," says Greenfield. "There are 100-plus in the cast and 100 lives that have touched the show in one capacity or another. Whether it's building of the sets or working on costumes and programs, every family gets involved and embraces (Open Fields') vision."

Open Fields Community Theatre's production of Annie, which stars 14 lead orphans, will run from January 19th through the 27th at the Mudge Auditorium at Dover-Sherborn High School. Evening performances will be on Saturday, January 19th, Friday the 25th and Saturday the 26th at 8:00pm. Matinees will be on Sunday, January 20th, Monday, the 21st and Sunday the 27th at 2:00pm. For ticket information go to www.open-fields.org. or call 508-654-OPEN.