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Exploring struggle, perseverance

Documentary on Turning Point Theater features local artists with message

By Priscilla Morrill

Peterborough, NH

Harkening back to the Greek roots of drama, a new Peterborough-based community theater group is exploring the mysteries of life. Breaking new ground in the art of public performance, they are doing this by means of a shared creative process between people with and without disabilities.

Building upon the success of a small community theater group Peterborough residents Richard Reho and his wife, Gail Dupre, established about six years ago while living in North Carolina, Reho, Dupre and Annie Graves of Peterborough started Turning Point Theater in Peterborough three months ago. Sharing their combined experience in performance, theater and human services, they volunteer under Reho's direction to facilitate and guide the group, which meets Wednesday evenings at the Peterborough Unitarian Universalist Church.

In addition to inclusiveness, this new type of theater gaining national and international attention is also dedicated to developing a shared creative vision among members in which they develop and perform original dramas.

"It's revolutionary, but it is very gentle and very tender," Reho said Tuesday of the group's collaborative work. "This is stripping away roles and getting back to what is truly authentic about ourselves."

At the core of our humanity, he said, we're all equal, all on common ground.

"When I say everyone meets on common ground, it's because when we face the mysteries of life we're all disabled in a sense, we all have struggles to overcome," said Reho.

The Peterborough group is in the midst of developing its first performance piece. Graves, who provides musical support for the group, said the goal is to create high-quality, cutting-edge performance pieces. Reho noted that it took the North Carolina group seven months to develop "The Song that Greens the Earth," which they performed in 2005 and 2006.

Durham, N.C., filmmaker Kenny Dalsheimer's recently released documentary, *A New Kind of Listening*, is about the progress of the North Carolina theater group, Community Inclusive Theater Group. Through the eyes of one of its members, Chris Mueller-Medlicott, a young man with cerebral palsy who could not speak and has since passed away, the film explores this co-creative, inclusive theater concept.

A New Kind of Listening is the story of a visionary director, a one-of-a-kind theater group, and a young man who could not speak, yet found the voice he had been looking for all his life," according to a statement about the upcoming screening of the film, which is currently making the rounds at international film festivals.

The hour-long film will play Monday at 7 p.m. at The Peterborough Community Theatre, a wheelchair accessible venue. Admission is free and open to the public. Following the film, members of the Peterborough theater troupe will give a short performance and performers featured in the film and Reho will be on hand for discussion.

To learn more about Turning Point Theater, contact Gail Dupre at gaildupre@yah-oo.com. For more information about the film, visit www.anewkindoflistening.com. The screening event is sponsored by the Polus Center for Social and Economic Development, a human services agency with a new office in Peterborough. Visit www.poluscenter.org for more information.