

# OUR TOWNS Hartington

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## The World's A Stage For Cedar Co. Theatre Group

### Company Schedules Fundraisers For Next Two Weekends

**BY LORETTA SORENSEN**  
P&D Correspondent

Camaraderie, creativity and cheer are just some of the products of the Cedar County Theatre group, which first brought community theatre to Hartington in 2002.

One of the main organizers, Shelley Lammers, said her participation in community theatre in another community was so gratifying she wanted to help bring the opportunity to Cedar County.

"All the schools here have always been very focused on one-act plays, speech and theatre at the elementary and high school level," Lammers said. "Once students graduated, there were no theatre opportunities. It seemed to make sense to tap into everyone's experience, good ideas and creativity. Many people and community organizations have supported what we've done and that's made it all work."

Cedar County Theatre's first performance took place in a local Lutheran church that offered the group their facility's small stage. The group's premiere performance, "Evening of Culture," went off without a hitch, but members knew the facility arrangements could only be temporary.

"The church has a lot of its own activities and we knew we couldn't expect them to accommodate our needs for future performances," Lammers said. "Finding a more permanent location for our plays was probably one of the biggest challenges we faced."

What the theatre group discovered in their search was a "retired" stage in Hartington's city auditorium. The area, which hadn't been used in many years, had been closed off and many people were unaware it was even part of the building.

"Once we found the stage was there, we made plans to raise funds and renovate it for use," Lammers said. "By that time, we had realized we needed a place for props, costumes and set materials. Once we had the funds, we were able to build stage doors so they would open for performances and close for security. There were already some theatre-style seats in the building. We used the bleacher seats that were already there and brought in some more chairs. That's where we've been ever since."

Spring 2004 saw the presentation of the group's first performance on the "new" old stage. Now that they had settled the logistics of performances, it was time for the group to dig into their own artistic talents to see what resources community members had to offer.

"None of us have formal theatre training," Lammers said. "One person in our group directed several plays. Others periodically take on directing responsibilities. Everyone is very committed to investing their energy and effort into the productions. That's what makes it possible."

In light of their facility and small number of members, Cedar County Theatre puts careful thought into selecting the productions they present. They're sensitive to the expectations of their local audience, which generally numbers around 150 people. They haven't attempted a musical — yet.

"Putting on a musical production is one of our goals," Lammers said. "For now, we focus on providing one or two theatre events each year. With the busy schedules everyone keeps, it's always challenging to find people who have time to be involved."

The "magic" of theatre is one of the elements Lammers believes brings Hartington residents to performances.

"I think people like to see their family, friends and neighbors on stage," Lammers said. "That can be a scary experience for some people. One year the Hartington Public School principal of took part in an event. We hope that surrounding communities will take an interest in the performances too. We'd love to see residents from communities like Coleridge, Wynot and surrounding towns in the audience."

"Radio TBS" and "How the West was Fun" are among the other theatrical productions Cedar County Theatre has pre-

sented. The group has also provided some improv, dinner theatre and brought children's theatre to town for several past summers.

"Our most challenging performance was probably 'How the West Was Fun' because it was a period piece," Lammers said. "We needed dance hall costumes,

**Everyone is very committed to investing their energy and effort into the productions. That's what makes it possible."**

SHELLEY LAMMERS

cowboy costumes and a bar set. There were also about 15 characters in the play."

Anyone with an interest in theatre productions is welcome to take up membership in Cedar County Theatre's group.

"We're always looking for people who are willing to be on stage," Lammers said. "All you need is the desire to be part of a play."

For the past couple of years,

Cedar County Theatre has partnered with the Hartington Public Library to organize fundraisers. This year's event finds the theatre group setting up "Match Game" at the Hartington Golf & Country Club.

"It's the game show that was so popular in the '70s and '80s," Lammers said. "A local celebrity will be playing 'Gene Rayburn' and we'll be getting the audience involved in the game. Hopefully we'll all have some fun and the audience will have a chance to laugh at us and at ourselves."

The event will be held two different evenings — Saturday, Feb. 27, and Saturday March 6. Social Hour begins at 6 pm and both shows begin at 7 pm. Fondue and hors d'oeuvres will be served by Friends of the Library.

Tickets for "Match Game" can be purchased at DJ's Variety in Hartington and at the Hartington Public Library. A limit of 75 tickets is available for each performance.



PHOTO: LEE CARL

The Cedar County Theatre group has partnered with Hartington Public Library to develop a "Match Game" fundraiser. The event will involve audience participation and proceeds will support the theatre group and the library. Pictured are, front from left: Tom Grube, Ron Pearson, Colin Kathol, Juanita Lammers and Alan Wortmann; back row: Maggie Fleming, Maddie Bromwich, Gayle Hochstein, Faye Burbach, Becky Wortmann and Bill Heimes. Not pictured: Jane Heimes, Connie Arens, Larry Koranda, Diane Sudbeck and Ryan Eickhoff.

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