

REHEARSAL AT FREEDOM PARK



PHOTOS BY YALONDA M. JAMES - yjames@charlotteobserver.com

(From left to right) Morgan Grubbs, 14; Matt Carlson, 13; Heidi Woodward, 14; and Kaitlin Wightman-Ausman, 12, talk to a small audience after rehearsing a scene from their play, "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," at Freedom Park on Saturday.

Acting to help the disabled

Students draw support with 'Charlie Brown'

BY APRIL BETHEA
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As the teens smiled and laughed through scenes from "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," others stopped passersby walking through the park.

Their message was simple: We're from Playing for Others, a group of teens interested in theater. We're putting on a play to raise money for LifeSpan, an organization that helps people with developmental disabilities. Will you support us?

But their goal is much bigger than that.

"You can use your gift and make a difference for others," said James Kennedy, a freshman at Northwest School of the Arts.

Jen Band started Playing for Others last year, inspired by a group she saw as a college student in Ohio with the same name that would offer free admission to performances in exchange for canned goods.

Band, 26, wanted to do more by creating a group that com-

bined her interests of acting and working with children. "A lot of teens would get involved in theater and become very self-absorbed," she said. "I wanted to take something they're passionate about and help others."

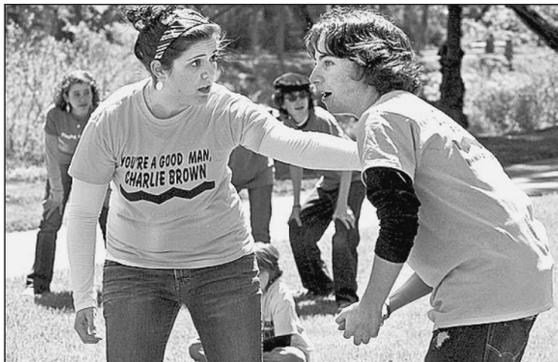
In all, 47 teens in grades six to 12 have joined the effort since it began in August, overseeing everything from set design and acting to fundraising and ushering.

The group will perform "Charlie Brown" three times Friday and Saturday at Spirit Square in uptown Charlotte. Money raised will pay for books and therapists at LifeSpan's Circle School, where the teens have volunteered.

To date, the students have raised more than \$12,000 - far more than an early goal of \$5,000. "We were just so excited" to pass the goal, said Hayden Rockecharlie, a freshman at Charlotte Catholic School.

The teens staged Saturday's rehearsal in Freedom Park to drum up support. Their energy was catching as they ran through several musical numbers; more than 40 people stopped to catch the act.

Among them was a family in



Hayden Rockecharlie, 15, and Isaac Josephthal, 13, practice a scene.

which the daughter was being treated for a brain tumor at Carolinas Medical Center. After talking with Band about the project, the mom told her, "You changed my life today."

Others promised to buy show tickets or donate to their cause. "They are teaching adults about the power of giving," Band said.

Added Charlotte Preparatory School sixth-grader John Crum: "This is an organization that is utterly devoted to showing we're not just sitting around and watching TV. We're doing something."

Want to Go?

Playing for Others will perform "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" at 7:30 p.m. Friday and 2:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Saturday at the Duke Power Theatre in Spirit Square.

Tickets are \$15. Make a reservation at 704-372-1000 or at www.carolinatix.org. Details: www.playingforothers.org

VANDALISM

Officials hunt for 'Ghost' of Garner

City leaders offer reward to stop graffiti popping up everywhere

BY MARLON A. WALKER
(Raleigh) News & Observer

GARNER — For months, the word "Ghost" has been popping up on buildings and street signs in Garner, and no one knows what to make of it.

It's not tied to any gang, said Sgt. Joe Binns with the Garner Police Department. He believes the culprit is likely a juvenile having a little fun.

Whoever it is, city officials just want it to stop.

"It's a major nuisance to the community," Binns said. "They're just putting 'Ghost' everywhere."

Every few days, Garner police officials get a call about the graffiti. Recent targets include a railroad bridge, several street signs and a parking lot sign at an apartment complex.

Most of the vandalism has been done to local businesses or government property, such as North Garner Middle School.

Fears that the vandalism is being seen by others as a blow to Garner's dignity has prompted the town's Board of Aldermen to pass an ordinance requiring graffiti to be cleaned up within 48 hours after being reported. The board is also offering a \$1,000 reward.

Police, too, are offering an award. Assuming the miscreant is a juvenile, police are offering \$500 or one of the following: a Microsoft X-Box 360, Sony PlayStation 3, or Nintendo Wii. (This is on top of the town's \$1,000 reward.)

"It's an aggravation to the people," said Alderman Buck Kennedy. "It's not the kind of picture we want to present to people thinking about coming to live in Garner. This is out attempt to snuff it out - to get rid of this act rather than let it become ... something of a fad."

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Now departing: 20 humans pulling heavy plane

Which team tugs the best? Find out Saturday

BY STEVE LYTTLE
slyttle@charlotteobserver.com

What's the quickest way to manually pull a 145,000-pound aircraft 20 feet?

Teams from Charlotte-area businesses and organizations will compete Saturday to find

out.

"Pull for Charlotte" is a fundraising event for CPCC's scholarship fund. Teams of 20 members use ropes to pull the aircraft - a difficult task at first, but one that gets easier as momentum builds, organizers say.

Spectator tickets are \$5 in advance and \$10 at the door. The event will be at the US Airways maintenance hangar, off Yorkmont Road at West Boulevard, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Charlotte/

Douglas International Airport and the Charlotte Chamber are co-sponsors.

Competing teams include CPCC, the Carolina Panthers, Carowinds, Charlotte/Douglas International Airport and the N.C. Air National Guard.

To enter a team, contact Cheryl Walker of the Charlotte Chamber at 704-378-1300 or cwalker@charlottechamber.com; or CPCC's Cheryl Richards, 704-330-4665 or

cheryl.richards@cpcc.edu.

Spectator tickets are on sale at all CPCC campuses and the Charlotte Chamber office.

After Market Sale

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