

Staging a comeback

Jamboree 'graduates' will make their return next week. **A3**

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2013



PHOTO/SUSANKNUDSEN.COM

Rehearsing for Jamboree are (from left) Rose Boniello, Kris Linton, Amy Migliorelli and Deb Rinaldi. The shows will be held in the Benjamin Franklin auditorium on Feb. 6, 7, 8 and 9.

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PEOPLE & PLACES

Jamboree alumni will be returning to the stage this year to help raise funds for scholarships.

This will be the first time in the history of the event that parents will perform in Jamboree after they "retire."



PHOTO COURTESY OF DIANA FLOYD

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Time for Jamboree

TO THE EDITOR:

It's that wonderful "jamboree" time of year again and "The British are Coming!" Jamboree 2013 promises to be four evenings you won't soon forget - with songs you love, dance, and wit to light up the stage. Best yet is the reason we do it - to raise money for the Jamboree Scholarship Fund, which offers needs-based scholarships to graduating Ridgewood High School seniors.

Since 1947, Jamboree has showcased the many talents of the Ridgewood High School parents and guardians in a musical revue that spans the decades. Building sets, designing and making costumes, being a part of the band, backstage heroes, singers, dancers, and actors -

there is something for everyone - and it all comes together in four wonderful nights to benefit higher education for our kids.

A few very special shout-outs - Lois Compain, director; Claudia O'Rourke, stage manager; Susan Knudsen, photographer extraordinaire; and Mark Manke, stage construction, all of whose tireless enthusiasm and dedication are unsurpassed. Our producers, Diane Loughlin, Kris Linton, Tom Krenn and PJ Latwani, are tops.

Show dates and times are as follows: at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, Feb. 6 to Feb. 8; and at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 9. All shows are held in the Benjamin Franklin Middle School Auditorium. Tickets may be purchased in advance at rthjamboree.org. Support the shows and become part of the solution, and make a dream come true for a deserving senior. The Jamboree Scholarship Fund, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) qualified charity, and all contributions are tax deductible.

There will be special "Giving Back to our Community" tickets available for Wednesday's general admission shows. For more information, visit rthjamboree.org.

SEAN J. MCCOEE
Ridgewood

JAMBOREE 2013

Alumni return for another run

BY DARIUS AMOS
Staff Writer

They were released from week-night practices and weekend rehearsals, and they were no longer subject to the physical demands of a rigorous dance routine or the temporary embarrassment on stage.

They were seemingly free, yet they came back for more.

More than one dozen Jamboree "graduates" will make their return to the stage next week, marking the first time in the history of the Ridgewood High School (RHS) community variety show that a group comprised of alumni parents is scheduled to perform. Since the curtains first went up in 1947, Jamboree had been staged solely by the parents of current RHS students.

So, why the change in 2013? And more curiously, why have those liberated parents come forward for another round?

The answers to both of those questions seem to go hand-in-hand.

It starts with the students. All Jamboree participants are asked to contribute a minimum amount of money, either out of their own pockets or through advertisements and sponsorships. Funds raised are used to defray the show's operating costs, while some cash is banked for the following year's production.

But the largest chunk of all proceeds raised during Jamboree season goes toward need-based college scholarships that are awarded to RHS seniors each spring. The Jamboree scholarship committee, which selects each year's recipients, reviews applicants' academic records but puts most weight on the students' financial need.



PHOTO/SUSANKNUDSEN.COM

Producers of Jamboree 2013 are (from left) PJ Lalwani, Kris Linton, Diane Loughlin and Tom Krenn.

a number for them."

For Jamboree alumni Ann and Stephen Levitan, both of whom return this year after "retiring" from the stage in 2007, stepping back into the spotlight means helping other parents further their child's education.

"While Ridgewood is rightly perceived as a community with many resources, it's also a diverse community with a range of family incomes and resources. And even in 'wealthy' towns, there are families with substantial needs that can be satisfied in part through the support of the community via Jamboree," the Levitans said in an email.

Parent Gimai Ma Lam, who has been on the Jamboree stage for eight years, has personally benefitted from Jamboree and wants to embrace the "pay it forward" concept.

"In 2006, my son received a generous Jamboree scholarship which went a long way to furthering his education. I want to thank the Village of Ridgewood and RHS for bringing the community together year after year for this wonderful tradition," she said.

requires a plumber, that person should consult the Jamboree mailing list for help, she said.

"It's amazing how many parents come out to volunteer their time, on stage and behind the scenes, during the show or after," said Fucito, who has been involved with Jamboree since 1986. "Even after they leave Jamboree, everyone stays in touch through emails, newsletters and our Facebook page."

"It is a wonderful benefit to the community," added alumni group member Linda Scarpa, "and I would venture to say at least 80 percent of all people or merchants of Ridgewood have had some impact on Jamboree whether in donations, past participants or children who have directly benefited."

Parent Diana Floyd, who last year co-chaired the Party Planning Committee, jumped at the chance to join the Jamboree alumni group and continue giving contributions.

reographed by Lynn Needle, but they boogied and bopped with relative ease and plenty of gusto.

"You're setting a precedent. This is the first year we're doing an alumni number, so you have to be great," Needle told the alumni.

Needle, the founder and artistic director of the Art of Motion studio in Ridgewood and 16-year choreographing veteran, need not worry about her alumni group. If the individual members know one thing, it's how to perform at Jamboree.

A self-described "diva at heart," Dianne Graham said she returned to Jamboree because she "knew it would be fun to once again hang with other theater wannabes."

"In the past, one of the biggest challenges was to make sure there were no wardrobe malfunctions with all the quick costume changes between numbers. This year we only have one alumni number, so I should be safe," said Graham, who took on many off-stage roles when her last child graduated from RHS in 2010.

Wayne Brewster has held a variety of on-stage roles during his previous 13 years in Jamboree, including a caveman, "Flying Elvis" and an Irish step dancer. For "Cats," Brewster has a dancing and speaking role.

"Remembering the words to the song and dance steps" pose the biggest challenge, according to Wayne.

Jeff Wilson first joined Jamboree in 1996 for "Radio Daze" and has since served in many capacities: He produced the 1998 show and performed on saxophone for many years with the pit band. For him, there was no doubt when asked to join the alumni number.

In the program's first 10 years of existence, 107 RHS seniors received a total of \$18,000 in one-year scholarships, according to Dotti Fucito, vice president of the Board of Trustees and Jamboree's unofficial historian. To illustrate growth, Fucito said the Jamboree board in 2012 presented more than \$90,000 in one-time scholarships to 15 students.

Board members and show organizers said that in other years the total annual scholarship pot topped \$100,000, a number they hope to attain in 2013. To do so, they recruited a little help.

"With the economy the way it is, we wanted to raise as much as we could for the scholarships," said Lois Compain, who returns for her second year as director of the show. "We made an exception this year and reached out to our alumni to see if they wanted to come back, and we would design

A community within

Jamboree parents often cite their dedication to the entire community as one of the main reasons to return each year. They are not only participating in a community function and helping provide for a students' higher education, but parents will explain how they joined an invaluable network of neighbors who help neighbors.

Fucito drew comparisons to another well-known Ridgewood group, Dads' Night. Both groups are known for establishing long-lasting bonds among neighbors and uniting both ends of town, even after their stage times have passed. If someone ever holds a fundraiser, needs an electrician or

"The camaraderie and enthusiasm are definitely a big allure, but the fact that we are raising money for students to go to college is the most important," Floyd said. "Not only does it benefit the students, many restaurants and shops get more business, it's entertaining for all who come, and it is such a blast being a part of it, that many parents make new friends and get to get out of the house."

Return to glory

With so many benefits, it's easy for anyone to understand why parents, particularly the alumni, return to the Jamboree stage.

Roughly 15 of the original 24 alumni participants in this year's show spent last Saturday morning blocking out their moves and perfecting their routine. There were only a few missteps in their snippet from the musical "Cats," cho-

"Being able to get back on stage this year is a real treat, and I have to tell you the thrill is the same as 17 years ago," Wilson said. "Most people watching Jamboree who have never been involved can't begin to understand the commitment each of us makes to be part of Jamboree: the hours of practicing, rehearsing, selling ads, organizing schedules ... All-in-all it's a labor of love for those of us who understand what it feels like to be part of such a worthwhile and fun endeavor."

"Yes, I've been around for 17 years, but so have so many others who just can't seem to let go of Jamboree," he said.

All Jamboree performances take place at Benjamin Franklin Middle School. The show begins at 7:30 p.m. on Feb. 6 to 8. The Feb. 9 show will begin at 7 p.m.

For more information and advanced ticket sales, visit rhsjamboree.org. Tickets will also be available at the door.

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