



Limelight gives back by providing community workshops

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Courtney Helen Grile, Director of Community Engagement, provides workshops with ARC, SAYS, Odyssey of the Mind and Girl Scouts

Limelight Theatre's Director of Community Engagement, Courtney Helen Grile, has created partnerships with several organizations in the community including Florida Odyssey of the Mind, Saint Augustine Youth Services (SAYS), The ARC of St. Johns County and local Girl Scouts groups.

Last fall, Limelight provided workshops for Odyssey of the Mind students to help them prepare for their competition - developing collaborative ideas and honing performance skills.

"For Odyssey of the Mind, I worked with their director to determine the goals of the workshops. After those meetings, I created a workshop that would achieve those desired outcomes. It was heavily focused on creative collaboration, with performance techniques tied in," Grile said.

The partnership with SAYS began in fall 2014 when Grile began a series of workshops with all the residents living there, which aimed to develop communication, collaboration and empathy skills.

"We use theatre games and exercises that were originally designed to help actors learn to trust, communicate, collaborate and express themselves during the course of rehearsals or acting classes as tools for developing those skills for everyday use. They are interchangeable," Grile explained.

The SAYS partnership will continue in spring 2015 as she goes back to work with the oldest two groups of boys, taking a look at power structures/oppression (peer pressure), as well as creating a performance piece in which the boys will address the issues that are most important to them. A May date will be announced soon for the performance at Limelight Theatre, which will be open to the public.

This winter, a partnership with the ARC of St. Johns County began with a series of workshops for the adults at the Community Center on Cuna Street in downtown St. Augustine.

This partnership began to flourish when Grile contacted Jean Rahner about making a connection with the ARC and the staff. Rahner is directing "The Boys Next Door," a play which features developmentally challenged characters.

Through this partnership, Lynne Funcheon, Director of Community Services for The ARC of the St. Johns, came to speak with the cast about the community they would be representing.

The ARC participants were invited to preview the show before opening night. The ARC workshops will be ongoing and will eventually turn into performance opportunities for these participants as well.

"The participants in the ARC program interact and engage fully in the workshops," Grile said. "They play the games and contribute their ideas into the creation of tableau and scene work."

A talk back was held March 19 after the performance of "The Boys Next Door." Director Jean Rahner, Lynne Funcheon, and Kathy Jackson, Executive Director of the Arc of the St. Johns, answered audience questions and talked about the show.

Later this spring, Limelight will be hosting the Girl Scouts in a workshop that will enable many of them to earn another badge. In the past, Girl Scouts have taken tours, watched theatre shows and helped with outdoor and grounds improvement at Limelight, which presented other opportunities for earning badges.

Limelight Theatre also has started a free Youth Performing Company, ARTiculate.

"This free group for participants allows them to create original works about issues that are important to them, as well as delve deeper into varying topics using theatre as the tool," Grile said.