

Students take easy trip to 'South Pacific'

By TIM SMITH
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Many Farmington High School students took an easier way to travel to the South Pacific. They signed up to join the Farmington Festival Theatre.

Tonight, at 7:30 p.m., will be the debut of their adaptation of the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic. Additional shows are 7:30 p.m. Friday and 7:30 p.m. Saturday; all performances are at the school auditorium.

"It's coming together pretty well," said cast member Emily Escott, during a break in Monday's dress rehearsal. "I wanted to be part of it. A couple friends did musicals before and said it was really fun."

Emily, portraying Polynesian

child Nagana, is one of 136 FHS students to sign up for the production - either making the cast or starting on the crew. Many are participating for the first time.

She is one of many cast members who in order to get into character will don bronzing makeup and put on "grass dress" (staring on newspaper) over their swim suits.

"It's one of the largest productions we've done," said director Leanne Young. Assisting her is student director Kim Drötar.

According to Young, performing South Pacific was always a goal. "The show sends a good message about prejudice and tolerance, and this is a good time to do that."

But, until this year, not

enough male students signed up to participate in a school production of South Pacific. There are about 20 young men helping perform the story, set on an American Navy base located on a South Sea island during World War II.

Cast in the leading male role is Adam Pierce, an Elio de Beque, an exiled Frenchman trying to woo a Navy nurse named Nellie Forbush, energetically portrayed by Jessica Petrus.

Another male in the cast, Collin Kravis (as Luther Billis) sparked along with Petrus during a rehearsal scene that included a funny cross-dressing bit. While performing the song-and-dance "Honey Bun" during a war-time Thanking talent

show, Kravis wore a grass skirt while Petrus wore an oversized sailor suit.

Other cast members include Owen Weber, as Joe Cable; Kristel Stricker, as Liat; and Amanda Patton, as Bloody Mary.

Young noted the efforts of non-cast members, too. Some created many of the sets that are used for the 26-scene production. And, music will be performed by the FHS band/orchestra, directed by Norm Logan and by the vocal music group, directed by Evelyn Schuetz.

Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$7 for students and are available at the door on performance nights. Farmington High School is located at 32000 Shilawasse, west of Orchard Lake Road.



STAFF PHOTO BY BRYAN MITCHELL

South Seas romance: Adam Pierce and Jessica Petrus run through a dress rehearsal for "South Pacific" at Farmington High School. Performances start tonight.

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to see bolstered. "It's real useful to people," said Smith, who works in the library. "Some (groups) have been represented for years and years. Others, like the YMCA, have drifted

away. We'd like to rope them back in."

Sharing information

Members are encouraged to bring handouts to share. A table

in a corner of the basement meeting room held everything from fliers touting the Concerta at the Coakick series to a list of books for sale by the Farmington Hills Historical Commission.

The meetings are informal in tone; members sit in a u-shape at tables and banter freely. Lunch is a cold buffet served during the meeting. It begins with introductions and announcements of upcoming community events. Maliszewski says group dynamics change each time, depending on who's there.

"Our continuing problem is trying to get everyone to come together," she said.

The Feb. 1 meeting, held out of sequence to avoid a conflicting engagement the last Thursday in January, featured staffers from SWOCC, Brian Golden from the Farmington Historical Society, Kay Briggs who chairs the historical commission, and representatives from the Farmington Exchange Club, Lions Club, Optimist Club, Chamber of Commerce, Farmington Hills Special Services Department,

Oakland County League of Women Voters, and Paul Barber, director of the Farmington Community Band and a founding member of the Interagency Council in 1998. In its first year, it had 60 paid members.

Caren Collins told the assembly about the new cable contract that went into effect Jan. 1.

"There is greater system coverage and our playback capability has improved," she said. "Thanks to provisions in this new cable contract, Access TV is new and improved."

For instance, new technology will allow Farmington viewers tuning in on Channel 10 to watch the Farmington School Board meeting at the same time viewers in Novi can see their local school board meeting on the same channel.

Collins also revealed that all 82 schools in Farmington/Farmington Hills receive free cable television for the 15 year renewal term with Time Warner.

"With Access TV, we have a very strong commitment to use television to communicate. Channel 12, the public access

channel, is a free community resource," she said.

"You can fax or mail your message exactly how you want it or submit a tape. If your group has an upcoming charity event, contact an Access producer."

SWOCC offers free television workshops monthly. Interagency member Brian Golden revealed that he recently completed a useful session there. The facility is located at 24021 Research Drive in Farmington Hills.

"Hundreds of volunteers have taken the course and are willing to run the cameras, to direct," said Collins. "You can be a guest or do your own show."

For those submitting tapes of community events, "no special training is required," said Collins. "You can use your own cameraman."

"Our staff is available to help. Our goal is to represent the community."

Collins said that new software will allow SWOCC to have a published program schedule soon.

Collins introduced SWOCC production assistant Lisa Antu-

na as a contact person. She can be reached at 473-7268, ext. 15.

New calendar

In the past year, the Interagency Council with help from the library has been working toward the development of a community calendar on the worldwide web. Cross links to organization profiles and web pages for those organizations will also be included.

Groups with no Internet access will be able to use library computers to input their data or create web pages of their own. Furi demonstrated how the calendar will work. Interagency members will be testing the calendar soon and once it's fully operational, other community organizations will be invited to participate.

New and former members are welcome to attend Interagency meetings. The next date is Thursday, March 22 at 11:30 a.m. For more information, contact Joanne Maliszewski at 888-7366 or Marilyn Smith, secretary, at 474-7770 or e-mail her at smithmar@farmlib.org.

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