

What makes Lakewood Center for the Arts run?



In an era of limited funding for the arts, the Lakewood Center is well on its way to reaching its fundraising goals and Lakewood Theatre Company (LTC) and its fellow tenants are operating in the black.

Why should the Lakewood Center thrive while others struggle? At least part of the answer lies in the conservative philosophy and financial planning behind the Center and that it should be supported by those who use it. Each group operating under the Lakewood Center umbrella pays for itself and manages its own day-to-day operations. On the other hand, each benefits from the concept of a "shopping mall for the arts," sharing visibility to 100,000 people each year.

The community of Lake Oswego is another factor in the success of the Lakewood Center; its higher than usual number of civic leaders, above average income, large number of artists in residence, and community support of the arts all add up to a solid support system.

Lakewood Theatre Company is a third factor; as a popular and financially successful member of the arts community, it is the cornerstone and parent organization around which Lakewood Center has been built.

LTC began in November, 1952, when a group of Lake Oswegans decided that their community was not complete without a theatre and decided to organize what was then known as the Oswego Players. From that first production of *Blithe Spirit*, the Players performed in junior and senior high schools and halls throughout the Lake Oswego area, having no permanent home during its first nine years.

In 1961, a fund drive was launched that led to the purchase of a vacant Methodist church on Greenwood Road. Beginning with *Arsenic And Old Lace*, the company, then known as Lake Oswego Community Theatre, staged more than 110 productions there before they outgrew the facility. By then the 100 seat theatre was continuously sold out, the building provided no room for class and rehearsal space, and off-stage storage was extremely limited.

When the Lakewood School became available in 1979, an advisory task force, determined that acquiring the building would encourage people to learn, teach, display, and above all, participate in the arts. With this in mind, the LTC non-profit corporation decided to expand its purposes and became the Lakewood Center for the Arts.

A \$1.1 million capital fund was established to purchase and renovate the school and put the programs on line. After eight years, in 1987, the goal was realized and the final payment was made to the school board. The funds came from individuals, businesses, corporations, foundations, and civic groups. None of the money came from city, state, or federal sources.

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In the fall of 1990 the theatre company changed its name from Lake Oswego Community Theatre to Lakewood Theatre Company. The name change was instituted to more closely identify the theatre with the programs at the Center and to better reflect its mission of providing professional high quality entertainment and education.

In November, 2003 Lakewood completed a \$3 million dollar project to build a new stage house for Lakewood Theatre Company. The new auditorium features 220 seats with none further than 35 feet from the stage, a new stage house with fly lofts, traps and a new hearing-assisted sound system. Theatre programs now enjoy an average 85-90% sell out rate, mostly from pre-sold subscription packages.

The Center is run by an elected board of directors made up of community leaders, legal, business and arts professionals, and a small staff which includes Executive Director Andrew Edwards, Executive Producer Kay Vega, a technical director, costumer, and office workers.

The key to operating the Center, however, is the support of volunteers. According to

Edwards, 400-500 volunteers are needed to make things work, in all areas from office work to the daily running of the individual organizations to the physical labor of renovating and maintaining the building and grounds

What groups make up the Lakewood Center? Lakewood Theatre Company, as the parent non-profit, is the oldest and best known of the building's occupants, and key to the Center's financial success. Lakewood is the oldest continually operated not for profit theatre company in the Portland metro area and attracts more than 40,000 people to its shows.

Other tenants at the Center include the Dance Studio, home of classes in Danceaerobics, exercise, and ballet; tap, and jazz by Terry Brock; Lakewood Center Entryway Gallery, a regional display and sales gallery of art work in our main foyer; the Community Arts Pre-School, offering 3 and 4 year olds a program enriched with art and dance; the Children's Theatre, a small studio theatre used for classes; and the Children's Art Studio, offering display space for art and classroom space for short term use. The Piano and Organ studio provides space for music lessons taught by Kay Vega and ReRuns - Secondhand Treasures, is a resale shop originated and staffed by the Lakewood Associates, a support auxiliary of the Center. Volunteers collect donated merchandise and re-sell them to the public. The proceeds are used to renovate and improve the building.

Downstairs is the Community Meeting Room. The hall seats up to 150 people for wedding receptions, banquets, cabaret theatre, conferences, and Rotary luncheons. Also downstairs is the Costume Workroom, providing storage and workspace for LTC productions.

An annual June event at the Center is the Festival of the Arts. This city-wide celebration is sponsored by the Lakewood Center, the Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Lake Oswego Parks and Recreation Department. More than 23,000 people attend performances at the Center and the park and view more than 1,000 pieces of artwork.

Fundraising is a continuing activity realized through contributions, gifts-in-kind, special projects, and the proceeds of the resale shop. The combined operating budget for the LTC and Lakewood Center is \$1.3 million per year. Income from ticket sales, fees, classes, room rentals, and special events cover about 70% of total expenses, an unusually high percentage for arts centers by national standards. The balance comes from contributions.

The LTC/Lakewood Center is a 501(c)(3) not for profit, tax exempt organization and your contribution is tax deductible to the extent provided by law. We welcome your support! Come be a part of our success.