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 LOCT 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 art 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.

"... A MEETING PLACE FOR 100,000 PEOPLE A YEAR TO LEARN, TEACH, DISPLAY, AND ABOVE ALL, PARTICIPATE IN THE ARTS."

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 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.

Other tenants at the Center include the Dance Studio, home of classes in Danceaerobics, exercise, ballet, tap and jazz; Lakewood Theatre Company Entryway Gallery, a regional display and sales gallery of artwork in our main foyer; the Community Arts Pre-School, offering visibility to 100,000 people each year.

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 $1.9 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.

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