



5 Facts About The Acme Theater

By Ginny Keesler

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Maynard — **1** Acme was formed in 1992 to create an enjoyable but dedicated community theater experience that, according to its executive director Dave Sheppard, was difficult to find at the time.

“Acme was started by a couple of techies and directors,” Sheppard said. “The people who started it had worked with other theaters in the area and were frustrated with the politics. We started with an idea that hard work and fun can work hand in hand. That’s a balance that a lot of groups have trouble finding.”

Acme Theater is a non-profit organization run by volunteers.

2 Sheppard said that Acme focuses on working with the Maynard community. Last summer, for example, the theater put on “The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe” to benefit a local soup kitchen, he said.

According to Sheppard, cast members have also interacted with the community by talking to shop owners in the downtown while hanging up signs for shows and by manning the community table at the farmer’s market. In addition, he said that Acme hires local businesses when there is work to be done on the theater.

“We’re very, very connected to the community,” Sheppard said. “Maynard is a great place. It’s a town that just won’t give up. After all the ups and downs it rose up out of the ashes. It’s still a wonderful, beautiful, vibrant town.”

3 Sheppard said that another focus for Acme is taking risks.

“It’s trying to present to the community new stuff, stuff they haven’t necessarily seen before,” he said. “We try to carve out our own niche, stuff that’s a little cutting edge or technically more challenging.”

As an example, Sheppard referenced Acme’s August 2009 production of “The Dead Guy” by Eric Coble. The subject of the play is couch potato Eldon, who is given the chance to spend one million dollars in a week—if he agrees that reality show viewers can chose a mode of death for him at the end of that time.

“The Dead Guy” had never been done in the New England before it was put on by Acme, Sheppard said. As the production was going on, the audience could chose to watch it on stage or on live TV screens placed around the theater.

“It gave them a chance to see that what’s going on, on television isn’t necessarily what’s actually going on,” Sheppard said.

4 This January, Acme is planning to host its ninth annual New Works Winter Festival, which is held over two nights, each

featuring nine plays. The plays are 5-12 minutes long and generally involve four to eight people, Sheppard said.

According to Sheppard, there has been a lot of competition to get into the festival.

"It's wonderful," he said. "We get scripts all year long that want to be in the festival. We have received 400 scripts. That has become one of the audience's favorites. I refer to it as ADD theater."

If you don't like a play in the festival, Sheppard explained, it's not very disruptive to the overall experience because it is soon over and another one begins.

5 Acme has twice been chosen as one of the top 10 community theaters in the country by the American Association of Community Theatre.

"A few year ago, when we started, we were known as a home of misfits," Sheppard said. "That has changed over the years."

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