THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Crucial Fundraising Appeal for Wagon Wheel Center for the Arts

EMILY ILLINGWORTH KOSNIK, Board President, states:

“Wagon Wheel Center for the Arts is a premier ‘learn, create and do space’. A living venue where our theatrical productions are the hub and the many forms of art are the spokes: Wagon Wheel Junior, Wagon Wheel Symphony of the Lakes, Wagon Wheel Conservatory, Wagon Wheel Professional Theatre, Wagon Wheel Community Theatre, and Wagon Wheel Concert Series. This structure creates a wheel that gains momentum, driving our mission to provide performing arts experiences that create community unity, educational opportunities, and economic growth.

Together, we can ensure the longevity and vitality of the arts, creating a legacy of cultural enrichment and economic prosperity.

KRISTIN MASON, Board Treasurer, reminded Wagon Wheel patrons and donors that:

“Arts organizations are under great financial stress at this time, and Wagon Wheel is no exception. With the 2024 summer season about to begin, there is a crucial need for tax-deductible donations to augment ticket revenue as the professional cast members arrive and prepare to open the season.”

OUR SIX SPOKES

PROFESSIONAL THEATRE
One of the oldest summer stock theatres in the country and among the few theatre-in-the-rounds in the nation, has been a professional non-equity theatre since 1956. Most of the artists and technicians come from universities and performing arts colleges across the country for the summer season and holiday musical.

REVENUE $1,239,393 • EXPENSES $864,232

SYMPHONY OF THE LAKES
Symphony of the Lakes is a professional orchestra with more than 100 paid musicians, celebrating local and regional talent. It offers youth opportunities through the Young Artist Competition and school collaborations.

REVENUE $23,725 • EXPENSES $67,423

WAGON WHEEL JR.
Wagon Wheel Junior offers students ages 9-18 opportunities to perform in youth musical theatre productions, engaging over 200 students annually.

REVENUE $29,052 • EXPENSES $19,023

COMMUNITY THEATRE
Community Theatre gives adults hands-on theatre experience, fostering connections, friendships, and a sense of belonging within the community.

REVENUE $28,047 • EXPENSES $19,294

CONSERVATORY
The Conservatory’s mission is to provide the highest quality training in Acting, Voice, and Movement from instructors who are active participants in professional theater in a safe and affirming environment, preparing students of all ages for a lifetime of theater engagement.

REVENUE $43,194 • EXPENSES $51,072

CONCERT SERIES
We host events from all genres of music and comedy! There is no better space to be up close and personal to a concert than right here at the Wagon Wheel.

THERE HAVE BEEN NO CONCERTS IN 2024.

TYPICALLY, CONCERTS RECOVER COST.

ANNUAL GENERAL OPERATING & STAFF EXPENSE: $677,197

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JORDYN

I value the mentorship I received from older students, the special guest directors, and especially the Conservatory staff. I’m glad I can mentor the younger kids while increasing my time participating in theatre activities.

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SAM

2515 E Center St, Warsaw IN 574.267.8041 866.823.2618 wagonwheelcenter.org

Kira Lace Hawkins
Director of Education and Community Engagement
kira@wagonwheelcenter.org
To support our immediate operational needs, we need to raise $400,000 in donations and sponsorships.

Your support is more critical now than ever.

Cost to produce one professional theatre show: $200K

Approximately $200K inn keeper tax dollars are generated annually from visitors to the Wagon Wheel

Wagon Wheel ticket sales are down 23% vs pre-pandemic levels in 2019 (due to cast illness)

Season subscriptions and tickets are sold to visitors from 31 states

53% of ticket buyers live outside Kosciusko County

The number of nonprofit theaters in America had grown significantly before the pandemic, but now many small and midsize companies are closing.

Book-It Repertory Theater in Seattle, Triad Stage in Greensboro, N.C., and Unexpected Stage Company in Maryland announced their closures.

Chicago has lost at least six companies from its vibrant theater scene.

Greg Reiner from the National Endowment for the Arts notes that two to three organizations are closing each month.

Large institutions are also facing substantial layoffs and cuts.

- New York’s Public Theater cut 19 percent of its jobs
- Brooklyn Academy of Music cut 13 percent
- Center Theater Group of Los Angeles cut 10 percent.
- Dallas Theater Center reduced its full-time staff from 70 to 38.

The pandemic worsened existing challenges for nonprofit theaters, such as the decline in subscribers. Hartford Stage and Kansas City Repertory Theater have each lost half of their subscribers, making them more dependent on unpredictable single-ticket buyers.

A survey by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Census Bureau found that only 10.3 percent of American adults attended a musical last year, down from 16.5 percent in 2017, and only 4.5 percent attended a play, down from 9.4 percent.

Financial impact of pandemic

The financial strain from the pandemic persists, impacting our ability to fund operations through ticket sales alone.

We continue to face financial pressures from COVID-19, which forced us to cancel an entire season in 2020 and subsequent performances in 2022 and 2023 due to cast illness. The struggle to supplement ticket sales with donations and sponsorships continues.

Economic impact

The economic impact of Wagon Wheel on Warsaw and the surrounding county is substantial.

This summer, we plan to serve over 350 youth, employ over 100 professional artists, technicians, and directors from across the United States and attract over 45,000 patrons to Warsaw, driving revenue for local businesses and boosting the regional economy. However, these activities significantly raise our expenses.

Community cornerstone

Approaching our 70th anniversary, the Wagon Wheel remains a community cornerstone, providing educational excellence for all stages of life and economic and cultural strength to our region.

As a nonprofit, our mission relies on community generosity and partnership.

Immediate need

To break even, we need to raise an additional $400K on top of the $240K in individual donations received in 2023

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NYT Article Summary


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