

??? Hayswood Theater and Community Unity would like to Announce the showing of a play entitled, *Bang Bang You're Dead*. Free to the public. In this play, 15 drama students have to put themselves into the role of being the shooter, or the victim, of a school violence crime. They have real-life roles in the school shooting that spawns the play, to open at Hayswood Theater for three free to the public shows. The shows will be performed Friday and Saturday, September 5 and 6 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, September 7 at 2 p.m.

Written by the award winning playwright, William Mastrosimone, this 45 minute play was inspired by those who survived and the families of Columbine High School Shootings. Mastrosimone gave his heartfelt testimony, saying he had to write something, "The national tragedy of kids killing kids sweeps this country and no one, not even the schools, the parents, the pundits, nor the government has a clue how this affects all of us,"

The student actors are intensely dedicated to this workshop sponsored by Hayswood Theater and Community Unity, here in Harrison County. "Though it is a small town, and a good place to live," said Mrs. Ponder, Director, "we do need to be aware and prepared to talk about this subject." In her job, she works with many teens and knows first hand the issues they must deal with each day including: drugs, school safety, cyber-bullying, MySpace, even safe homes, etc. "This county is already ahead of the game," Mrs. Ponder noted, "Safe Place, the Y, Gerdons, and those types of Programs really help young people have options."

The play has no answers but does reach the hearts of those performing, as well as, the audience. It is set in a jail cell. Josh is there the night after he has killed five fellow students and his parents. These victims come back to haunt him. "Why me, Josh?"

Daniel Friedrich who plays Josh, "the shooter", said, "this play is real life drama!" "The kids are portrayed just like real life and these are issues we deal with each day. I am glad to be playing Josh, as I get to see inside the mind of a really confused young man who wants to succeed but feels no one cares or listens." Daniel graduated last year from North Harrison High School and is employed at Blue River Services. He has a real heart for helping others, "I was so touched by Daniel's portrayal of Josh," Mrs. Ponder shared, "Daniel really made himself see inside of Josh. Like Josh, Daniel is very smart, witty, and fun, but unlike Josh, Daniel is very diverse and is a strong enough young man to communicate his problems. Daniel feels that it is hard to be a teen and feels that he has had parental support, but he has known kids just like Josh."

"We can all be that one step from the edge," Daniel added with sensitivity.

Rachel Sieg, who plays Katie, is a hard-working Floyd Central student. Rachel explains, "I am so excited to be working on this production of *Bang Bang, You're Dead*. I can connect to this play on a personal level and I hope everyone who sees this will go away with a greater understanding than they had before. I have lost a friend to this type of violence and I am still dealing with it, and always will be dealing with it."

Joseph Kempf, a young man from Louisville, is acting at Hayswood for the first time. He plays the role of Matt. "Matt is kinda a "trog", a kid that stands out as non-conforming," Joseph explains. "I think school violence goes unnoticed until something awful happens. We really have to look at the root of what makes violence in schools. I am enjoying my role as Matt because we are getting the message out. This play is a real eye-opener. Kids like Matt get made fun of for not conforming. They don't have a group to eat with at lunch. They aren't bad kids. They just get judged for their appearance or an attitude. Matt isn't the kind of kid that would shoot but he is the kind of kid that

gets hurt by teasing and bullying. There are also kids that just get ignored which is just as

bad.” He added. “I have had some experiences and I can relate to the characters in the play first hand.” Joseph added.

Kelly Smith, is not a new comer to Hayswood Theater. She has acted in *Once Upon a Mattress*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Cinderella*. She is a vibrant young lady who plays Jessie. “Jessie isn’t afraid to get into Josh’s face” Kelly explains. “She wants answers and she wants justice. Jessie is kinda prep and is all about being top of her class, a perfectionist, and an activist for the underdog.” Kelly added. “At school I can be pretty quiet. I enjoy choir and acting, but for the most part, I don’t stick out at school.” She noted. Kelly attends Corydon Central High School. “It is sometimes hard to feel safe at school,” she noted.

Ryan Burton plays the father, grandfather, and various other parts. Ryan has had some experience with foreign film and the realizations of these films as far as depth and he feels that this play brings to the heart real depth. “This is a great play that shows the true depth of the human heart. It shows us that even the coldest murderer has a heart and is capable of bleeding, despite the masks and walls.”

Zach Herbert who plays the “jock”, Michael, said, “this play is amazing because it shows what happens in our world today. It will raise awareness and present a deeper thought on all the problems at hand.” Zach is only fourteen but he has been in many theatrical performances at Floyd Central High School.

Dallas Kane-Meunier, who fills several of the small roles and is acting as a Student Director, said, “I have enjoyed working with the sets and staging for this production. I have met some new kids and we have been able to talk about lots of things very openly. It’s not like competition for band or for a sport. We are all on the same team and it doesn’t matter what school we are from.”

In fact, Mrs. Ponder, the director, noted that she is pleased that this play brought together over 15 teenagers from four different schools and four counties. “We have actors from small schools to inter-Louisville schools. These kids have been able to share and relate to each other. They have been able to see that being a teenager is being a teenager no matter your school or background, and now they hopefully know that there are adults who care and adults they can talk to.”

“Hanna, Lydia, and Sadie Moore are three of the nicest young ladies you would ever meet. They came over from the Brandenburg area to do the play. Sadie is one of our youngest actors, age 12, and has been able to take on a variety of fill-in roles. Sadie wants to be a screen-writer and feels that this play will help her with this passion and drive to spread a message. Lydia is playing Emily, a cheerleader, who brings lots of energy to the set.” Mrs. Ponder complimented. Other actors and helpers include: Mariah Simpson, Michael Cash (drummer), Arie (who does the lights), Rachel Smith (who plays the mother and other small roles), and Brianna Norris. “Brianna is our youngest actor,” says Mrs. Ponder with a smile. “She has taken several summer workshops here at Hayswood and I knew she’d be able to handle the sensitivity of this material. I am very thankful her parents allowed her to participate in this play even though she is only in Junior High School, here at Corydon.” Brianna plays the judge and does other parts in the play. “She is one of the hardest workers on set.” Mrs. Ponder added with pride.

Lance Ponder, Assistant Director and Member of the Hayswood Board said, “I have never experienced anything like these kids have today. I am amazed by these young people.”

There is nothing in this play that glories or glamorizes the violence or the shooters. It is focused on consequences.

“Some people think we are exploring the shootings” said Mrs. Ponder, but she explained,

“We have to use this method to get the message out. This year there have already been over ten shootings. This is nothing new. These types of shootings have been recorded as far back as April 9, 1891 when James Foster, age 70, shot a group of male students playing on a playground at St. Mary’s Parochial School, injuring 5. We all know Michael Carnel the 14 year old boy from Paducah, Kentucky - Columbine, Virginia Tech, and even the shooting this year at a Louisville factory.”

Josh cries out, “I didn’t know it would be forever...I thought I could just hit the reset button and start over. I just wanted you to listen.” Mrs. Ponder states very sincerely, “Now is the time to listen to our kids. Now is the time to teach them that dead is forever, there is no reset button.”

Hayswood Theater and Community Unity want to get the word out in spite of the controversy surrounding this type of production. “If even one person is helped it will be worth it,” said Lance Ponder, Vice-President of Hayswood Theater. Mrs. Ponder would like to thank everyone for their donations and support of this awesome production.