

Culture Days “animateur” leads workshop for drama group

Members of the Kamsack Players senior drama club had opportunity to attend a two-hour workshop on Sunday with a man who is spending this summer working as an “animateur” for Culture Days.

Matt Josdal is travelling the province working with community theatre groups to help promote culture, and “the vast amounts of talent and passion for theatre that are hiding all around Saskatchewan.”

One of the biggest challenges facing community theatre groups in this province is getting the younger members of smaller communities to participate, Josdal said in his website. “Part of the problem is that many of these town schools no longer have dedicated drama programs. If they’re lucky, students might get some exposure to theatre through some sort of arts education class, and that’s about it. Many no longer have extra-curricular drama, and those who do are often spearheaded by volunteer coordinators whose hearts are in the right place, but who lack the experience and education to really get the kids excited about theatre.

“One of the things that I’ve been trying to do this summer is to offer commu-

nities the answers to their questions, whatever they may be,” Josdal said. “I know that sometimes there aren’t a lot of resources out there for these community groups when they encounter an area of making theatre that they might not have a lot of experience in.

“One of the most interesting things about the Culture Days animateur program is that they were specifically seeking working artists,” he said. “The most questions, hands down, that I get from people in the communities that I have been in contact with are some variations of: ‘What projects are you working on?’ or ‘So, are you in a play right now?’ or ‘What are you doing next?’

“As animateurs, we are facilitators and educators, but first and foremost we are artists,” he said. “I’ve attempted to find a way to balance my own work with that required of me through SaskCulture. “I think it is critical for Saskatchewan artists to take opportunities to show the rest of Canada what we’re capable of doing here. The depth of talent in this province is incredible, and I think we should all take any chances we get to get out to the rest of the country and share what

we’re doing here.

“One of the roles that I see Culture Days playing in these rural communities is showing the value of culture activities to parents and children alike,” he said. “And I mean the value of these activities. Theatre, art, music and all the other art forms you can think of aren’t just hobbies, aren’t just for children and aren’t to be dismissed. They’re among the most valuable assets we have.

“Despite a culture history that stretches back to the dawn of humanity, we’re still figuring out just how deeply the arts impact our lives,” he said. “Studies show that education in music helps in development across the board, and helps to improve performance in math, for example. We’re still learning.

“Despite that, sometimes there is a stigma about the arts in rural communities; especially when a person chooses to pursue it as his or her livelihood. I remember the comments and confusion that ensued when I declared after high school that my future lay in the theatre. And yet, over time people came to support my decision, but it certainly took time to show them that I was serious about my education, and my work.

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Photographed with Matt Josdal, an “animateur” for Saskatchewan Culture Days, who was in Kamsack on Sunday to lead a workshop with members of the Kamsack Players drama club, were Ashley and Milena Hollett.

Kamsack Players
receive instruction
from Culture Days
facilitator



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