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CURTAINS FALL. The 2020 play production of "Shrek Jr." featured Michael Fanning as Lord Farquad. This year, Sevier's play came to a halt due to technology issues and staff changes.

Play tradition canceled after more than twenty years

BY CALI GROENEWOLD

This year, a group of student actors and stage hands rehearsed for a spring performance of the musical "Fiddler on the Roof". After decades in production, however, the annual "Sevier on Stage" show has been canceled.

Chorus teacher Annie Davis was the director of this year's play. According to her, the lighting and sound system issues were the main reason the play was canceled.

"At this point, the lighting board in the auditorium is basically shot, resulting in there only being one or two lights that actually work the way they should," she said. "The sound board glitches have only gotten worse, to the point that it was skipping large gaps in the music or just over songs completely. We also faced issues with the set being built since we had to wait on the fire marshal to make his rounds before we could even bring in the building materials."

Ava Ferguson, a 7th grade student, was cast as Bielke, one of the daughters in the show.

"We did not have the equipment ready for the show," she said. "It was all old and broken,

so it didn't work properly. If we had tried to replace everything it would have taken a long time and we didn't have the money."

The fault doesn't rest entirely on the shoulders of the tech failures. According to Davis, students also were having commitment issues.

"I think students are overcommitting themselves to a thousand different things," she said. "I love how many opportunities Sevier gives students to explore different creative outlets and the amount of interest we have in other extracurriculars and sports. However, sometimes schedules conflict and students are asked to choose between Sevier on Stage and the other event."

Nine times out of ten, students chose the other event in those cases this year.

"I've always been willing to split time and rehearsals with other extracurriculars and sports, but this year it just didn't work like it normally has," Davis said.

Khloe Blevins, who was supposed to play Shprintze, another daughter in the show, agreed.

"People weren't coming to rehearsals, taking it seriously, or anything like that," she said.

Since the cast had commit-

ment issues the auditorium could not provide the technology needed for a full musical, Davis proposed a "Saturday Night Live" style variety show.

"We still wanted to showcase the talents of the students somehow, and a variety show would do just that," Davis said. "It would combine musical theater with comedy and be a really fun experience for all involved. Unfortunately, we didn't have enough student interest in it to make it a reality."

Khloe Blevins had no interest in a variety show.

"I didn't like it that much because I'm pretty sure it would only be singing," she said.

Ferguson agreed.

"I was honestly a little disappointed," she said. "I would have rather done an actual show. I was really upset. We had been working on the show since September."

Finding a path forward became even more difficult for this year's play when Davis decided to resign her position at Sevier Middle.

"I decided to leave 'Sevier on Stage', and Sevier as a whole, for numerous reasons, but the main one being that I personally just

wasn't in a good headspace," she said. "I needed time to reflect on my time as a teacher and really reconsider if this is what I want to continue doing for my career, or if I want to explore other opportunities outside the classroom."

The cast struggled seeing Davis leave.

"I understood that she had to do for her own well-being but it was still upsetting," Ferguson said.

Blevins, too, did not take the news well.

"I was so sad, I cried, because she was amazing," she said. "I could tell her stuff; I could trust her."

Without Davis guiding the program, a new chorus and theater teacher will have to figure out if and how to revive "Sevier on Stage".

"Keeping 'Sevier on Stage' alive and thriving is something that is so important to me and I hope whoever my successor is realizes the joy and opportunities the shows bring to the students and the community," Davis said.

She does believe, however, that without serious repairs in the auditorium, the play probably doesn't have a future at Sevier Middle.

"I have asked for the lighting

and sound system to be updated since I've been here, or at least for something to be done to where it's a better set up not only for the plays, but also for any concerts that happen in there," she said. "However, I was always met with the answer that since we were moving buildings, there wasn't any use spending money on things that would be fixed once we were in the new building. Now that the move has been postponed indefinitely, it's definitely time for the school system to realize the poor condition that the auditorium is actually in."

The cast also hopes for a teacher who cares about the program.

"It all really just depends on if they care about acting or plays like Ms. Davis did," she said.

For her part, Davis plans to spend some time figuring out her life.

"I think I'm young enough to where a career change isn't out of the question and I am thankful that teaching for so long has given me an incredible skill set that I can take into whatever is next for me," she said. "I hope so much that the play and Sevier on Stage is continued by someone."

Inflation strikes the community

BY SYDNEY GENTRY

Gasoline and groceries. Luxury items and entertainment. The cost of everything has been rising tremendously. Inflation is to blame.

Inflation is when prices rise at an alarming rate. For the United States, the rate of inflation is currently 7.7%, a near 40-year high.

With inflation rising, people are struggling more and more with the cost of everyday items.

Egg prices alone, for example, went up about 60% in 2022.

This national trend has had a big impact on local families.

"Prices for groceries and gas have gone up, which means I have to spend more on daily living," math teacher Conner Scarce, said. "I've also been trying to buy a house, but inflation is keeping prices way too high for me."

Still, Scarce is optimistic.

"I wish my paychecks were

a bit bigger to help out, but I really don't have much to complain about," he said.

Raven Olson, a 7th grade science teacher, agreed.

"Increased prices mean less disposable income," Olson said. "I have student loans and a mortgage, so it can be very stressful when the cost of living goes up."

Middle school students have noticed the change in prices, too. Sawyer Wining, a 7th grade student, has seen the effect inflation has on the Kingsport community.

"Prices are getting higher,

which means fewer and fewer people can afford things they need," he said.

One way the federal government has tried to fight inflation is to raise interest rates, which can slow the rise in prices. Although it has slowed inflation some, it has also made it even more difficult for people who need a loan to buy a house.

Some members of the Sevier community feel there are other things the government could do to keep prices low.

"Antitrust laws need to be

enforced and expanded, while consumer protections can be bolstered," Olson said. "Restrictions on lobbying, as well as a ban on congressmen trading stocks, would reduce insider trading and corruption."

For many, the issue of inflation isn't just about affording to buy a house; it's about affording food, water, and clothing.

"[They should do something], so more people can afford the products they need to survive," Wining said.