

Opera House presents "Fools"

by Tammy Johnson
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For those seeking a delightful theater experience, The McPherson Opera House presents "Fools" by Neil Simon.

"Fools" is set in the late nineteenth century Ukrainian village of Kulyenchikov and tells the tale of Leon Steponovich Tolchinsky, a young schoolteacher who arrives to

educate Sophia, the daughter of the town's doctor, Dr. Zubritsky.

Leon quickly discovers that the entire town is under a 200-year-old curse that has rendered its inhabitants extremely dumb. The curse, cast on the village by a sorcerer when Sophia's ancestor rejected his son, can only be broken if Leon can educate Sophia within 24 hours, which appears impossible given that

she only recently learned to sit down. Sophia's curse will also be broken if she marries Count Gregor Yousekevitch. Leon cannot allow this to happen because he has fallen in love with her.

Leon's determination, combined with the ridiculousness of the villagers' actions, creates a comedy classic. The play's humor stems from its characters' delightful stupidity and the

clever wordplay that Simon is known for.

The McPherson Opera House will present "Fools" on the weekend of September 27, with show times of 7:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday. Tickets cost \$20 each, with discounts available for students, seniors, military personnel, and parties of ten or more. To order tickets, go to mcphersonoperahouse.org



Kansas food experts outline problems of waste and access at inaugural summit

By AJ Dome
Kansas Reflector

WICHITA — Food experts in Kansas say food waste is a growing problem in the state and solutions to food insecurity may lie within local connections.

ICT Food Rescue executive director Stephanie Merritt, in a presentation Wednesday at the inaugural Kansas Local Food Summit in Wichita, said

food waste and food insecurity are two concerns that go together. Merritt's organization gathers edible food that would be wasted in the Wichita metro area and redistributes it to 16 nonprofit organizations, including homeless shelters and recovery homes that serve people suffering from food insecurity.

More than 30 other Wichita-area groups are on a waiting list to receive

food products from ICT Food Rescue. The agency was established in 2016, and Merritt said the nonprofit now features an Upcycle Kitchen housed in a church where an in-house chef reuses meal-delivery meals and fresh ingredients for clients in need. More than 50 volunteers "rescue" food every 48 hours from about 50 participating restaurants, nurseries, markets and caterers, Merritt said.

Last year, Merritt's group collected more than 205,000 pounds of food, equal to about 171,000 meals. In the past 90 days, Merritt said her team has conducted almost 1,500 food rescues across the Wichita area.

"We're offering a solution to food waste in our area," Merritt said. "If you don't live it, then you don't see how big of a problem this is."

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in 2022 more than 10 million households across the country were considered food insecure. USDA statistics indicate about 30-40% of the nation's food supply is wasted. Merritt said that is partly because of confusing labels on food products.

Consumers have a difficult time understanding the difference between an expiration date and a "best buy" date on food, as those labels are not government-mandated but are instead a food industry addition most



Kansas Local Food Summit participants take a lunch break during the Aug. 28, 2024, event at the Kansas Leadership Center and Kansas Health Institute offices in Wichita. The inaugural summit brought people from across the state together to discuss food insecurity and waste. AJ Dome for Kansas Reflector

often used to indicate freshness. Merritt said even she, as executive director of ICT Food Rescue, still gets confused by the dates printed on food products.

She said dairy products make up the biggest food group wasted in Wichita and the state of Kansas, in part because of misunderstood labels.

Kansas State University Research and Extension agents held community roundtables around the state last autumn to discuss food challenges and needs.

Across 14 different roundtable discussions, agents discovered Kansans want fresh, local food options available in local grocery stores, farmers markets and restaurants. They also learned that residents want stronger connections

between food suppliers and their neighbors.

University of Missouri food systems professor Mary Hendrickson said the state of Kansas has changed in the last 40 years from a predominantly wheat-producing state to one that produces more corn and soybeans, mostly intended to be used for cattle feed.

"A lot of agriculture in Kansas is oriented toward large, globalized, consolidated chains," Hendrickson said. "But there's a lot of folks concerned about what that means for their communities, for their ecologies, and for their livelihood, so that's when we start to talk about the alternatives."

Hendrickson said the alternatives include ICT

Food Rescue and other organizations that assist food-insecure residents.

In Kansas' rural and frontier communities, Hendrickson said, overall food security may involve "thinking big" on topics from water use and soil health to bolstering local partnerships.

She said food needs look different in rural parts of Kansas, where "food transactions" regularly include bartering for products or services. Enhanced partnerships across communities and organizations can help alleviate food insecurity, especially in sparsely populated regions, she said.

"We are sowing the seeds right now for what the future is going to look like," Hendrickson said.

Obituaries

LAURA LEE BRYAN GEORGE
DECEMBER 15, 1959 - AUGUST 29, 2024

Laura Passed away on Thursday August 29, 2024, at McPherson Memorial. She was born on December 15, 1959. Service arrangements are pending.

LEATRICE E. SCHROEDER

Leatrice E. Schroeder, 97, of Buhler, Kansas, passed away Thursday, August 29, 2024, at the Sunshine Meadows Retirement Community. She was born on October 24, 1926 in McPherson County, Kansas, to John and Emma (Froese) Peters.



She was a member of the Buhler Mennonite Brethren Church, where she was very involved with the supply center, cooking committee and the quilters group. Leatrice also taught Sunday school.

Leatrice was united in marriage to Milo "Mickey" Schroeder on May 28, 1946 in Buhler. He preceded her in death on December 21, 2015.

She was a devoted homemaker.

Leatrice is survived by her children, Maxelin Wiebe of Buhler, Nancy (Dale) Kopper of Wentzville, MO, and Don (Jan) Schroeder of Hesston; son-in-law, Royce Regehr of Inman; grandchildren, Rene' (Melody) Wiebe, Sean (Nancy) Wiebe, Brent (Kim) Kopper, Nathan (Michelle) Kopper, Debbi (Doug) Wiens, David (Lea Ann) Schroeder, Justin (Kelly) Regehr, and Troy Regehr; 21 great-grandchildren; seven great-great-grandchildren; and brother, Lawrence (Nancy) Peters of Hutchinson.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband; daughter, Gail Regehr; son-in-law, Gary Wiebe; and brother, Victor (Velora) Peters.

Funeral services will be held at 10 a.m., Saturday, August 31, 2024 at the Sunshine Meadows Retirement Community chapel, with family greeting friends one hour prior to the service in the chapel. Burial will follow at the Buhler Municipal Cemetery. Memorial contributions may be made to Sunshine Meadows Retirement Community in care of Buhler Mortuary, PO Box 589, Buhler, KS 67522.

NATALEAH "NAT" RUTHERFORD

Nataleah "Nat" Gillian Rutherford, 33, passed away peacefully on Friday, August 23, 2024. Arrangements are with Stockham Family Funeral Home, McPherson.

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