



DIRECTOR DORIA DROST (right) instructs a group of young thespians during a recent rehearsal of "The Outsiders." Photo / Per Peterson

'The Outsiders'

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from "Our Town" to the "The Outsiders" was a stressful process.

"I Googled shows with virtual rights, and it brought me to the Dramatic Publishing website, which is the company we're going through, and they have a full list of shows that they allowed virtual performances," she said.

A lot of those offerings, Drost said, were one-act shows, and there were only a handful of full-length plays available. Drost had to consider what she had to work with as far as the stage at the high school and what play best fit the surroundings at the high school; she ultimately determined that "The Outsiders" would be a good fit.

"I was told that the kids read 'The Outsiders' as part of a class in the eighth grade, so I was like, 'Oh, this will be perfect then,'" Drost said.

Cameron Hennis isn't one of those kids. He's only a seventh-grader, so he had a bit more of a learning curve compared to his fellow thespians, but said he loves being involved with the play.

"Practice is going great and I really like my character," said Hennis, who plays "Johnny." "I have watched the movie and I own the book and am currently reading it. I wasn't familiar with the play until try-outs so I had to figure out my character. The book and movie have helped very much. (I'm) taking lots of notes and finding how to be true to my character."

Hennis is also involved with band and choir, as well as football and is looking forward to playing basketball and baseball as well. He said he is taking his role seriously, as this is his first major role.

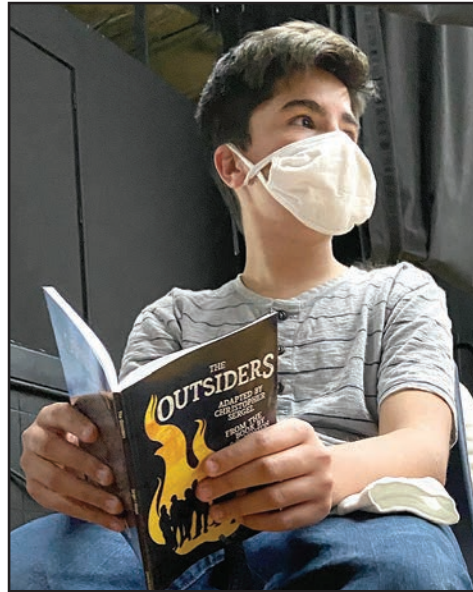
"I want to bring my best performance yet," he said. "I enjoy acting and have been involved with several plays. This one really is just perfect. I can act and bring someone complete opposite of me to real life."

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"The Outsiders" is a story set in the 1960s and features the "Greasers," a group of teens who come from rough upbringings, who are confronted by the "Socs" (Socials), a gang of wealthy teens. The rival gangs ultimately meet in a fight after one of the Greasers fatally stabs a Soc.

The main Greasers go by names like "Darry," "Sodapop," "Dally" and "Two-Bit." Annaka Hook plays Ponyboy Curtis, the younger brother of "Darry" (Delanyie Meyer) and "Sodapop" (Connor Towne). Mitchell Rolling plays "Dally" and Kathy Vang plays "Two-Bit."

"Our lead, Ponyboy, is played by Annaka, so that's going to be really fun," Drost said. "Two of the three brothers are female, and most of the Socs are also female — "Bob" is really the only Soc that's male, and that's played by Logan (Burns). It's been exciting challenging the kids and having them act in ways they wouldn't



CAMERON HENNIS, a seventh-grader, plays Johnny in TAHS's upcoming presentation of "The Outsiders." Photo / Per Peterson

normally act — that's been really fun."

Drost said because of COVID-19, the cast has been taking on some non-traditional rehearsals, which has provided an extra challenge.

"We've been meeting in person to do blocking with kids that could be here, and for those that couldn't we've been recording it; we have a shared Google drive that we all use, so that way they can all review it until they can be here," Drost said. "And I've been doing some one-on-one rehearsals via Zoom to run through lines, so when they can be here in person we can focus just on blocking instead of line delivery."

The young actors have also had to wear masks during rehearsals.

"Wearing a mask doesn't bother me much," Hennis said. "It's something I'm getting very much used to. I'm grateful that we can still have our activities."

Hook, a junior at TAHS, said donning a mask has provided an added challenge to rehearsals, especially as it relates to facial expressions.

"When you are in a play, a lot of emotion comes from your facial expressions — when wearing a mask you can't really do that," she said. "So when rehearsing you have to turn to different methods, such as a different tone of voice."

Hook said "Our Town" and "The Outsiders" are dynamically different both in story and the era in which they're set, but she has enjoyed taking on a role she really didn't plan for.

"I would have enjoyed doing 'Our Town,' but I was happy with the switch," she said. "I felt that since a lot of us know the story of 'The Outsiders,' we can develop our characters better. Also, many of the characters are close to our age, which makes it easier to relate."

Hook said she isn't bothered playing a male role.

"To be honest, I don't really think about it," she said. "Like many of the other girls

playing male roles, I make the character my own. It can be difficult at times, but I'm excited for the challenge."

Besides theater, Hook is involved in cross country, speech, track, student council, big buddies, peer helpers and FFA. Like her fellow classmates, Hook read "The Outsiders" in the eighth grade and memorized the poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay" by Robert Frost, from which her character reads quotes in the movie to pass time.

"This has helped me understand the characters and how to portray them," she said. "Since I have read and discussed the book, I understand the true meaning of the storyline."

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Drost said the feedback she has received from some cast members is refreshing, because it reminds her that they do know the story.

"A lot of them are saying, 'In the movie, they do this, so can we do this?' And I'm like, 'I don't know, let me think about it,'" Drost said. "I want them to be inspired about what they've seen and what they've read, but I also want them to be able to make the characters their own."

In a way Drost wants the kids to think outside-the-box when putting their own stamp on their character.

"Yes, your character in the movie is like this, but how do you want the character to be?" she said.

She said the girls who are playing male roles have to have the right personality to pull that transformation off. During auditions, she had all the students read for a variety of different roles so she could get a sense of how aggressive they were when a scene called for such an emotion.

"It's definitely a big jump, and it is a challenge, but they've been taking it in stride, which is fantastic," Drost said.

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Virtual performances of "The Outsiders" will be at 7 p.m. on Nov. 13-14 and at 2 p.m. on Nov. 15. More information will be available on that at a later date.

"THE OUTSIDERS" CAST

Annaka Hook - Ponyboy
Cameron Hennis - Johnny
Delanyie Meyer - Darry
Connor Towne - Sodapop
Mitchell Rolling - Dallas
Kathy Vang - Two-Bit
Logan Burns - Bob
Chandra Moua - Randy
Jenna Spanovich - Cherry
Kaylee Campbell - Marcia
Angie Yang - Sandy
Marissa Johnson - Mrs. O'Briant
Michael Vue - Jerry
Sophia Dieter - Paul
Sarita Canto - Doctor
Breana Lynn - Nurse
Rachel Pryzbilla - Mr(s). Syme
Crew Members: Ian Her, Katelynn Jensen, Yengoua Kue

Finance Director

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that you want to have a good level of expertise that we don't have now. Not only will it save us money, it will make us more efficient. We're in a situation where we have to manage our cash flow very carefully, because the city council has some aggressive things they want to do in 2021 — spending some additional money on roads, for example.

Hansen has drafted a job description that has been shared with the city council, although nothing has been formally discussed in an in-depth fashion. The finance director would hold down a deputy administrator title, and Hansen said that could give the City some kind of succession plan when the time comes he leaves his post.

Hansen said the City should expect to spend anywhere from \$75,000-\$80,000 to hire someone for the position; that money has been included in the preliminary budget, pending council approval. He said ideally the new hire would come in with some experience and would have a goal of becoming a city administrator in the future.

Current financial clerk Peggy Zwach, while seen as an obvious choice for the position, has declined the job offer, and told the council that she doesn't have the required degree to accept it, even if she did want it.

"Am I willing to learn from someone? Yes," she said. "Do I ever want to become the city administrator? No. Will I be a finance director in five years? Maybe, but not now."

Hansen's vision has Zwach continuing to take care of the City's payroll and essentially everything employee-related — personnel and human resources issues, training, evaluation and risk management.

The idea of hiring a finance director is part of Hansen's overall budget plan for the near future. Hansen has worked to simplify the City's budget by limiting line items by about 40%; the City is also in the process of going online with a new, more efficient financial system to replace its current antiquated one. However, there are holes in the City's system that need to be filled.

"We don't have a review

process (for employers) at all," he said. "So whether someone's doing a good job or not, nobody's getting a review. We have outdated job descriptions that need to be addressed. We have training certifications that people need to make ... our police department, utilities, fire department — they all have certifications and required training, and they do a pretty good job of tracking it themselves, but let's make sure we stay on top of those things. So, there's some holes here."

Zwach is essentially doing more in-office than what her job description entails without complaint, but taking her duties a step further on the accounting side is not something that is realistic at this point. And, according to Hansen, not having someone in-house with accounting expertise to handle things like debt service, and multiple operations and funds, is a "significant risk" to the City.

Hansen worked the position into the 2021 budget and was asked last month by Mayor Tony Peterson to develop a job description for a finance director. Peterson lamented that the issue was not resolved by a series of city administrators who have held the position over the years.

"When you have to turn around and give your auditing firm an extra 30 grand to come in because somebody missed something and didn't even know they missed it ..." Peterson said.

Hansen said that current employees at City Hall are doing a "great job," but it's unrealistic to ask anyone without the expertise to do the job of a finance director.

He added that there needs to be better documentation of what everyone does at City Hall.

"We have a lot of good people working hard at their job, but we don't know what they're doing sometimes," he said. "There's probably some things that are slipping through the cracks."

Hansen said not bringing a finance director on board would mean he would have to take on some of those responsibilities, and Zwach would need some additional training as well.

TAES

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building on that date is no greater than the risk of contracting the virus in the general community.

"If you were not identified to have close contact with the positive case you should still monitor for symptoms of illness, but do not need to stay home unless symptoms develop," Anderson continued. "If symptoms develop, stay home and consult with your physician to determine if medical evaluation is needed."

Anderson said action has been taken to thoroughly clean and sanitize the facility and the district is working closely with the MDH to monitor the situation. He went on to say the school district is asking all members of the community to minimize the spread of the illness by taking the following actions:

- Protect yourself and others by wearing a face covering when it is hard to stay 6 feet away from people; washing your hands often with soap and water; covering your cough and sneeze; and avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands.
- If you are sick, stay home from child care and other activities.
- Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home. Keep enough food, regular prescription drugs, and other necessities on hand in case you need to stay home and are not able to go out easily.
- Frequently clean all commonly touched surfaces (e.g., telephones, doorknobs, countertops, etc.).

"This is a challenging time, and I know many of you may be feeling stress or anxiety," Anderson wrote in the letter. "We will get through this together as a community, and will be stronger when we

emerge."

Anderson told the *Tracy Area Headlight Herald* on Friday morning that the district is taking a level-headed approach to the news.

"You can't go through this COVID world and not expect it to affect you, or someone you know some way, some how," he said. "The first hurdle is being mentally prepared for it, knowing it's coming. Secondly, it's not overreacting to it. We've just got to understand what it is, understand it happens in every school district and then take a level-headed approach to it."

Anderson said both public schools are vigilant in their work to keep things as clean and sanitized as possible — a practice that began after schools were shut down back in March.

"We sanitize thoroughly every single day," he said. "We're prepared every day. We aren't just waiting for someone to be sick. We're sanitizing every day as if someone has had it. That's why our teachers, in between classes, wash down the desks; the custodians at night do more in-depth sanitizing with chemicals and bleach."

Anderson is aware there will be concern in the community about a positive case at one of the schools, but he wants to ensure the public that they're doing everything they can to mitigate the issue in the name of safety.

"From the very beginning, as I told our staff, there are people on all sides of the spectrum of concern about the virus, and I respect that," he said. "I can't control how people react, but I respect everyone's concerns. People just need to know we're never going to do anything that will put any of our staff or our children in harm's way."

October 8, 1955 – October 8, 2020

Happy 65th Wedding Anniversary
to our parents

Bill and Joan Baxter

We love you more than words can say and are proud to have you both as parents.
Thank you for standing the test of time while raising 8 children.
We still don't know how you did it!!!

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."

Thank you for loving each other and for loving us!

Love,
Billy, Barb, Deb, Liz, Mike, Steve, Bob and Jen