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Pittsboro Center For The Arts

by Francis DiNardo



Someone once told me that I was a character looking for a play. I don't get it.

So, in order to find out what that means I decided to visit the Pittsboro Center For The Arts because plays are their specialty! In fact, I discovered that they have much more going on than just plays. Pittsboro is very fortunate to be the location of this theater.

I met with Tammy Matthews who, with her business and life partner Craig Witter, are the founders of the Pittsboro Center For The Arts. The multi-purpose space 18 E. Salisbury Street is home to an art gallery, meeting rooms, rehearsal spaces, and a classroom. Most notably the Center houses the Sweet Bee Theater, a 65+ seat auditorium which hosts performances for the Center's two performance groups: the Pittsboro Youth Theater and the new Pittsboro Community Theater.

As Tammy walked me through the Center, I became impressed with the creative use of the space. I entered a small reception area that opens into what is currently a bright gallery space which is in the process of becoming a new cafe. The name of the cafe will be Sweet Bee Caffe (yes, the 'ff' will give an Italian theme) which will serve cappuccino as well as pastries and other treats. Tami and Craig plan to open the cafe in late April. I'll have a new place to haunt!

As I continued our walk through the Center, Tammy pointed out to me the two small rooms where music lessons were in progress. We then passed through the wardrobe section on our way into the theater at the back of the Center. Tammy pointed out some of the stage props and settings that were scattered about and mentioned that Craig made many of the settings himself. The theater can seat over 65 audience members and the stage is large enough to support a sizable ensemble.

Tammy and Craig moved here six years ago with the intention of doing a children's theater. Although they moved into The Pittsboro Center For The Arts only a year ago,

the Youth Theater productions spent several years floating from one venue to another — the Pittsboro Community House, Kiwanis Club, Woods Charter School, they even presented a play at the Pittsboro Roadhouse.

They rehearsed and presented their first production, “The Jungle Book”, at The Pittsboro Community House. The production called for eight children actors but only five Pittsboro children showed up for the first rehearsal so Tammy, a 5th-grade teacher in Cary, was able to



bring in some of her students to fill out the cast. The production was a success. Of the five original Pittsboro children, three are still with the Pittsboro Youth Theater. Since then a growing group of local children has joined the group of cast members and many of them maintain their relationship to the theater even after they age out.

“One of my boys said to me, ‘Miss Tammy, I will always be here! Even when I go to college I’m gonna come back and I’m gonna work here!’ It warmed my heart,” said Tammy. “We have many that have been there for four years and four-and-a-half years. They just keep coming back and coming back. They do it for the community... and maybe they like me a little bit ... and they do it for each other! They’re such a tight-knit community. A lot of them were kids that were searching for a place...for an identity or for someplace to feel at home.”

“One of the kids said to me the other day, ‘Ya know, this is where I get to be myself,’ said Tammy. Noting the irony I said, “in a place where he’s acting!” We both laughed.



Tammy said they have five children shows currently running with over 50 kids. There are two productions of “Rapunzel”, one “Gooney Bird Greene”, one “Midsummer Night’s Dream” and a toned down version of “The Complete Works Of Shakespeare Abridged” for local high school students.

One of the biggest challenges at the moment for Pittsboro Center For The Arts is advertising their productions to the community. There are limitations with respect to advertising within the public school system — which is their best potential source of participants and audiences — but Tammy and Craig are hoping to take advantage of

additional social media sources. The Youth Theater plays are very popular with Pittsboro children and their parents. Almost all of the shows are sold out because proud parents like to bring everyone they know to see their kids perform. But Tammy and Craig would like to be able to encourage more kids to join the productions.

Summer camps are also a popular youth activity at The Pittsboro Center For The Arts. This summer, nine weekly summer camps for young children are offered. Each camp is one week long and in that time, children show up each day and rehearse for a small play that will be performed on Friday. In addition, there will be a 3-week intensive summer camp for older children which will end in a full production of "Peter Pan".

Tammy and Craig are also very excited by their new endeavor. The Pittsboro Community Theater will be a true adult Community Theater. The Community Theater is currently in the beginning stages of its first production, "Steel Magnolias", which is scheduled for the last 2 weeks in June. Auditions for players is underway and Tammy is very pleased with the talent shown by the prospective players. All the candidates were women because "Steel Magnolias" is performed by a small cast of women but Tammy tells me that future productions will require both male and female members of the community.

Maybe I'll finally find that play that my character is in search of!

Visit the link below to read about upcoming productions, auditions, camps and other opportunities at the [Pittsboro Center For The Arts](#)
18 E. Salisbury St., Suite A
Pittsboro, NC 27312

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