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## IMPACT THEATER: "Significant Theater" Making a Significant Impact



Frank and AnnMarie Irace, Founders of Impact Theatre

By: Cristin Sick

What better way to face the drama of daily life than by addressing it with drama in the theater? That's exactly what the "In Your Face Players" of Impact Theater do by taking tough situations and acting them out on stage for audiences that are continuing to grow in size.

Born in Frank Irace's Sunday School classes at the Palmyra Assembly of God about eight years ago, this real-life approach to drama seemed to appeal to the teen age group, but now draws audiences of all ages. Irace writes about real-life issues such as spousal abuse and pornography, among others, and the group performs them. Soon they decided to start a year-

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ly coffeehouse and performed for a small audience. With the outstanding response, they soon outgrew their Main Street facility, accommodating around 50 people, and are now drawing crowds too large for the area they use in the Palmyra Town Hall, which can hold about 100.

In roughly a year and a half, Impact Theater's audience has more than doubled, and the word is spreading. Irace is pleased with the fact that the group now draws spectators from Rochester to its performances in addition to the local Wayne County audience, showing that people are telling other people about this dedicated amateur theater.

However it hasn't always been an easy trip for the members of this cast and crew. "The feeling was that there were many talented individuals in the Christian community, who if given the chance, would love to use their talents outside of church walls," Irace recalled. Five years ago he decided to write a mission statement about his vision for the theater and sent it to over 50 local churches asking for a response of prayer and financial backing so the theater could firmly establish itself in the community. Surprised by receiving no reply, he was deeply discouraged and prayed for an answer. That's when he knew he had to finance the project he so greatly believed in on his own.

It is a labor of love as the cast and crew are not paid, and the theater depends upon the generosity of others. However, Impact Theater is continuing to make an impact upon the community, and is now funded not only by Frank and AnnMarie Irace, but also the Christian Community Church in East Williamson and contributions from the audience. In addition to the "In Your Face Players," the theater company features an artist once a month, offering a variety of music and dance to spread the gospel through the arts.

Irace feels that many different methods can point people to Christ in various unique ways. "Impact Theater exists to spread the gospel through the arts," he explains, "we have featured everything from music to dance and mime." In addition, the group offers free literary materials and Bibles in addition to their performances to assist in counseling and guidance. Hoping to help people deal with day to day struggles and confront hard issues, the "In Your Face Players" tackle life head on with their drama. As one audience member said after a performance, "This stuff is powerful."

The next item on the group's to-do list, is getting a place of their own to house their theater and growing audience. If you wish to attend one of the Impact Theater presentations, reservations can be made on their website, at [www.impactdrama.com](http://www.impactdrama.com).