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THESPIANS SPOTLIGHT LITTLE LEAGUE COACHES IN “ROUNDING THIRD” JAN 27-FEB 5

The Thurmont Thespians kick off their 2006 season with a little league baseball comedy by Richard Dresser that’s been a major league hit with regional and community theatre audiences around the country. “Rounding Third” will play for two full weekends, Friday thru Sunday, January 27-29 and February 3-5 at the American Legion Auditorium, 8 Park Place in Thurmont. Parking is free and there is handicapped elevator service access through the back entrance of the Legion.

The story revolves around the odd alliance of little league baseball coaches. “Head Coach Don”, played by David Elvove, holds many past Little League championship trophies has just one rule: “Winning is fun - losing stinks!” But his new “Assistant Coach Michael”, portrayed by Bill Collins, has never even played the game and just wants the team to “be captains of their own little ships”!

“Rounding Third” was produced regionally with great acclaim at the Contemporary American Theatre Festival in Shepherdstown, WV during the summer of 2004. It will also open the Caledonia Theatre Company’s 2006 summer stock season next June at the Totem Pole Playhouse in nearby Pennsylvania, but you will be able see it in Thurmont first! According to Director Spence Watson, “we chose this play to honor the coaches and players of the 2005 Maryland Little League Championship team from Thurmont and to honor all Little League participants in the surrounding communities!” For this show, the Thespians will be offering half-price discounts (or 20% for the Dinner Theatre performance on Sat. Feb 4) for to any current or former little league baseball coach or team member if if they wear their old or new team uniforms to the show! This special pricing offer was made possible by an Arts In Communities Grant from the Maryland State Arts Council.

“Rounding Third” takes its audience on a tumultuous journey of these two Little League coaches through an entire season, from their first tentative meeting to the climactic championship game. The audience becomes the stand-in for the team, so

the coaches speak directly to them about competition, character, punctuality, and the importance of wearing their equipment “the right way”.

“Assistant Coach Michael” believes that the job of the coaches is to shield the kids from the intense pressure of competition while making sure everyone has a good time. “Head Coach Don”, whose son is the team’s star pitcher, thinks the most important thing he can teach the kids to do is how to win - even if it means “stretching” a few rules. Out of these conflicting philosophies, the real issues of the play emerge: how should we raise our children? Since we live in such a ferociously competitive society, do we protect our children as long as possible? Or do we prepare them to be tough enough to win?

By the end of the play, Head Coach Don's personal life has come crashing down around him and he's forced to see both his own son and the team in a different light. And Assistant Coach Michael must confront an unfamiliar but powerful sensation: down deep, he too really does want to win! According to Thespians Artistic Director Beth Royer Watson, “Rounding Third is an important lesson for coaches and parents with children participating in any competitive youth activity. Dresser is making the point that over-emphasis on ‘winning’ has become the norm in today’s world.”

There will be Dessert&Show performances starting at 7:30PM for both opening Fridays, January 27 and February 3 for \$12.00 (\$6.00 for all Little League coaches and players wearing their current or former uniforms). The shows Saturday evening, January 28 and the two Sunday “Snack Matinees”, January 29 and February 5 are only \$10.00 (\$5.00 for Little Leaguers in uniforms.) There will be a cash bar service before and during both Saturday night performances and there will be a Ham and Fried Chicken Dinner & Show Theatre, Saturday, Feb 4 for \$25.00 (\$20.00 for Little Leaguers with uniforms) starting at 6:30PM. Advance reservations for the dinner theatre all performances can be made by calling Becky Urian at 301-271-7613 or emailing her at reservations@thurmonththespians.org.

In addition to the regular Saturday nights performances of Rounding Third, after the show, there will be a special preview of the Thurmont Thespians entry to the Maryland One Act Play Festival, “Foul Territory”, a short baseball comedy by Craig Wright which is not recommended for younger children due to “adult language”.

This production of “Rounding Third” is also underwritten in part by a Community

Arts Development Grant from the Frederick Arts Council. New lighting equipment for this production has been purchased through a grant from the Community Foundation of Frederick County, Inc.