

## Framingham Community Theater ready to begin

By **Chris Bergeron**/ CNC Staff Writer

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Calling all hopeful Noel Cowards and Sarah Bernhards: The Framingham Civic League wants you.

Auditions will be held next month for a new community theater group that will stage plays in the Civic League's auditorium.

"We want to bring quality regional theater to Framingham," said Rebecca Perricone, who will serve as the new group's artistic director. "We're looking for people who have a vocation to participate. There's so much joy in community theater."

The group will be called the Framingham Community Theater and will initially function as a Civic League program before evolving into an independent organization. The FCT group represents a collaboration between Civic League officials and local arts activists who want to revive live theater in Framingham.

Perricone, who has performed on Broadway and taught acting at Emerson College, said the new group will perform a murder mystery gala dinner show and fund-raiser on Oct. 21.

"A perfect amateur can be a fabulous actor," said Perricone. "We need all the support we can get. We're looking for people who know how to sew, work with electricity, lay carpeting or volunteer as ushers or help in the box office."

Auditions will be held Sunday, Sept. 18, from 2 to 5 p.m. at the Civic League at 214 Concord St. in downtown Framingham. People interested in performing should prepare a comedic or dramatic reading up to two minutes long.

A workshop to help people prepare for their auditions will be held Sunday, Sept. 11, from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Performing Arts Center at 140 Pearl St. on the fourth floor in the Danforth Museum Building. The audition workshop is free with a \$10 membership fee.

Once started, Perricone said the group will stage comedies, musicals and dramas. All MetroWest residents are invited to audition.

After reading several scripts, organizers are "narrowing in" on a suitable choice for the group's first full-sized production tentatively scheduled for Jan. 20, 21 and 22. Perricone said the fledgling group is "still at the grass-roots level," and hasn't settled yet on a director.

Civic League Executive Director Rebecca Justice said the organization's 13-member council decided earlier this year to explore local interest in starting a theater group to promote arts in the downtown and take advantage of the Turenne Auditorium.

"Our grand vision is to be a community center that has people from all over Framingham coming to the downtown to use our resources," she said. "We really want to offer programs and activities that bring people together and attract a diverse audience from north and south Framingham and surrounding communities."

Built in 1928, the facility then known as the Dennison Building hosted theater groups in the 1950s and later in the early 1990s. Justice said the 2,500-square-foot theater has a raised stage and about 150 balcony seats which, in combination with the floor space, will seat 450 people.

Theater groups in Framingham and Holliston have recently staged "The Music Man" and "Charlotte's Web" in the auditorium. Once the new group is under way, Justice said some renovation is planned. An initial meeting in May attracted sufficient public interest to convince Civic League officials to move ahead into the planning stages.

Justice said the theater group will start out "basically as part of the Civic League" and is expected to "grow into its own entity" over an as yet undetermined period of time.

While the theater group's final size and shape has yet to be determined, Perricone said she hopes it will garner enough local support over the next 18 months to offer three productions in its first season or two before maturing into five productions per year. The group will be seeking financial support from local businesses and other donors.

"We certainly have the talent to make this succeed," she said. "Now we have to make a coordinated effort and let people know what we're doing."