

## **Celebrating 10 years of performing arts at The Community House!**

### **The Stage 284 Story**

As we celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of theater arts at The Community House, no one could have envisioned the passion, interest, and support that would grow for this program. Until 2008, The Community House stage was only modestly active, with programs like The Libby Fireside Concerts, brown bag lunches, after school programs, and middle school dances. After becoming Executive Director in 2006, I would often daydream about a community arts program that would bring more life and vibrancy to our stage and organization. As a young person myself, I found participating in theatre provided a creative outlet where I could be thoroughly engaged, challenged, and accepted. I envisioned The Community House becoming a place where people could enjoy a similar experience – with a quality performing arts enrichment program that would impact community members of all ages! The possibilities seemed endless and bright.

With the talented and ambitious Hannah Mell, The Community House launched *Cape Ann Community Theater* in 2008. We set out to offer a place where people of all ages and skill levels could work with a diverse group of Directors whose goal was to inspire and develop skills in actors, singers, and dancers. Although our purpose has since been refined, our initial vision remains.

With the help of our Board of Directors and Advisory Committee, we rebranded to *Community House Theater* in 2010, and in 2015, we arrived at the latest iteration of a name: *Stage 284*. (*For those of you wondering about the significance of the numbers "284," it reflects the street number of The Community House.*) We wanted a name that was creative and linked the importance of the theater program to The Community House - the new name achieves this perfectly. In an era where many theaters struggle to keep their doors open, our program is fortunate to have a home within a strong organization that is committed to the arts. Stage 284 is a valued and critical program of The Community House.

Ten years later and still going strong, we wish to extend our gratitude to Hannah Mell for having the courage and energy to launch a theater company with us. She thrust immeasurable amounts of energy and time into the early productions, and despite having few resources, no staff and zero budget: she always created a warm and exceptional community experience for all. In addition, we extend special thanks to Cat Stramer and Greg Warwick, who have been actively involved since the early years, and to all the volunteers who have helped shape Stage 284 along the way.

Under the leadership of our first Artistic Director, Jay Pension, we grew our small operation into a full season program with four main stage productions and educational workshops for kids. Katie Clarke, our new Managing Director, has quickly won over the hearts of many through her new program, Stage 284's Youth Company, and her mesmerizing ability to engage children. Our youth programming attendance is often at capacity – a testament to the need in our community and the quality we deliver.

It takes a village to bring theater to life, and there are countless wonderful people who have helped us along the way. I would like to recognize The Community House Staff and Board of Directors for their daily support in maintaining and supporting our vision and operations. Our staff, Board, and volunteers along with our actors, their families and our audiences are all part of our "theater family". Because of you, our stage has come ALIVE with artistry and comradery that is beyond description.

It is an incredible honor and privilege, to witness the development of our actors, community, and the incredible works of art created every day at The Community House. We look forward to bringing the arts to you for many more decades ahead!

With gratitude,



**Melissa Elmer, Executive Director**