



News Release

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Ridgewater Theatre receives teamwork recognition at regional festival

WILLMAR, MN – Ridgewater College Theatre students received ensemble performance recognition recently at the Region 5 Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF), held January 20-25 in Sioux Falls, SD. Approximately 1,500 college theatre students and faculty from Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota participated in the festival.

The goal of KCACTF is to celebrate and recognize the achievements of college theatre across the region. It is a week-long festival celebrating year-long efforts, providing students and faculty the chance to attend workshops, lectures, see plays performed by other colleges in the region, and compete in everything from acting and directing to costume design and playwriting.

Last spring, a cast of 10 Ridgewater students and community members performed “All My Sons,” written by Arthur Miller and directed by Ridgewater’s Theatre faculty Matt Hegdahl, with assistant director Tanner Eberling and stage manager Abdullahi Sabri. Throughout the school year, college theatre faculty visit other college productions to respond to them. This allows the cast, crew, and director to get feedback on the show from a fresh set of eyes. Last April’s production earned the cast the Commendation of Achievement for Ensemble Performance at the festival in January.

“The Commendation is congratulating the cast for working well together as a unit,” explained Director Hegdahl. “The visiting respondent was impressed with our actors, and the work they did during the show. It’s a great compliment because usually there are actors who stand out, and that’s not always beneficial for a production.”

In addition, two Ridgewater performers, Damontae Smith (Detroit, MI) and Domonique McPhail (Murdock), were nominated to compete for the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship Auditions based on their roles in “All My Sons.” More than 350 students were nominated for the award and participated in round one with a scene and a monologue. “The students have three minutes to show the judges what they are capable of,” Hegdahl explained. The Ridgewater students did well, but did not make the cut of 64 to advance to the second of three rounds.

In years past, Ridgewater Theatre has received commendations for Costuming, Poster Design, Directing, and Playwriting.

“The heart and soul of the festival are the plays that the attending colleges put on throughout the year,” Hegdahl said. “It’s the work that students and faculty put into their shows that’s being celebrated at the week-long festival.”

Submitted Photo outline

Recognized for excellent teamwork on the stage, Damontae Smith (Detroit, MI), Domonique McPhail (Murdock), Jacob Maertens (Spicer), and Faizi Fifita (Willmar) are among the 10 members of Ridgewater Theatre's "All My Sons" cast to earn Excellent Ensemble recognition at the annual Region 5 Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF), held January 20-25 in Sioux Falls, SD. Other cast members include Kayla Vanderpool (Dell Rapids, SD), Yesenia Gomez (Willmar), Tristan Testa (Willmar), Colton Taylor (Box Elder, SD), Cayla Courteau (Milaca), and Aaron Marthaler.

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Ridgewater College is a community and technical college with campuses in the central Minnesota communities of Willmar and Hutchinson. The college serves more than 5,000 students through its nearly 100 academic programs and more than 68,000 training hours for individuals and businesses through customized training and continuing education. The college is a member of Minnesota State and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

Minnesota State includes 30 community and technical colleges and 7 state universities serving approximately 400,000 students. It is the fourth-largest system of two-year colleges and four-year universities in the United States.

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