Starlite Theater Group

By Mary Helen Darah

Starlite Theater Group is an independent 501c3 organization, founded in 2022, dedicated to expanding the arts in Sylvania and northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan. **The kernel of the idea was planted during a road trip that founders Sharon Lange and Linda Szyskowski took to Cherry Creek Cellars. "We were driving back and chit-chatting,"** recalled Szyskowski. **"Out of the blue, Sharon expressed that she had always wanted to own a movie theater in this area to show black and white classic films. I then told her that my daughter shared the same vision of having films that weren't available in mainstream theaters. Well, one thing led to another."**

The dynamic duo started doing their homework and worked toward finding a space for their vision. We were working toward finding a location knowing that Sylvania has never had a space large enough for our intentions. "We also decided to establish an organization so when a physical space appeared we would be ready to roll," stated Szyskowski, executive director of Starlite. "Since we had yet to find a space, we held our first event at Inside the Five. From there things began to grow. John Page and the people from Outdoor Sylvania Community Parks let us host an event at Nederhouser Community Hall on the grounds of Olander Park. Yet another happy connection that captures the voice of the community is with WGTE. When we were looking for a Halloween movie, they provided us with contacts to make it happen. Things just continue to grow."

As of late, the events the organization hosts are almost sold out. Starlite Vice President/Development Director Ben Malczewski believes needing a

L-R: Starlite Executive Director Linda Szyskowski, Vice President/ Development Director Ben Malczewski, and Public Relations Director Sharon Lange are thrilled to help cultivate and grow the arts in Sylvania.

bigger space is a wonderful problem to have. "We held an event at Heritage Sylvania and worked closely with them to show a film about Harriet Tubman. Space was tight," said Malczewski. "We have now not only grown in number of attendees, but we have expanded our offerings as well. Starlite is now featuring authors events that have brought national award-winning authors to Sylvania that are held at Lourdes University. Every university should have a dignified speaker series. Dr. William Bisset, president of Lourdes came on board and he and his team have been wonderful to work with."

Public Relations Director Sharon Lange is thrilled with the organization's progression. "Who would have thought that we would be here after spending a day at Cherry Creek, sharing wine, a great lunch, a germ of an idea and laughing about the possibilities. I am amazed at how far we have come," stated Lange. "The future is going to be fabulous. We are on the route to a space deeply rooted in the history and culture of Sylvania. It was never about financial gain but a dream to bring cultural experiences and create community connections. It is incredible that we are no longer forcing our friends to attend events and to see the community embrace them. Doors continue to open. Linda wrote her first grant and got us funding. It's simply incredible."

Malczewski does not regret the leap of faith the team took when founding Starlite. He stated, "It has been a learning process, a grind and an exercise in faith. We are building the stairs as we walk up them." The fearless executive director Szyskowski sums it up best, **"When you have a great purpose with dedicated caring people, opportunities keep presenting themselves. It will be a wonderful day when Sylvanians have close accessibility to the arts and cultural events. When we finally get to the brick-and-mortar stage I will cry. Starlite firmly believes that the arts not only broaden perspectives but can change lives by generating a stronger, engaged community."**

4833 Sylvan Prairie Ct.
Sylvania, OH 43560
Phone is 419-283-4291
email: info.starlitetheater@gmail.com

Starlite can be found on Facebook and Instagram. A quarterly newsletter is also available.