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FEATURES EDITOR

## Why Venice? Why not?

We are looking for men and women 20-30 years old to share their thoughts on Venice as a place to live and work.

If you grew up here and want to stay here to work and raise a family, tell us why. If you moved here from another part of the country or another part of Florida, why did you choose Venice? How about the job situation? How did you find your job? If you grew up here, would like to stay but can't afford to, tell us about that too. Is Venice a good or bad place to raise a family — or somewhere in between? If you plan to leave, do you plan to return? Someday? Never?

Call Jennifer Walchok at 207-1102. Leave your name and contact information such as phone number or e-mail address.

The Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota, located on the central west coast of Florida, will be offering turtle walks again this summer, giving visitors and residents an opportunity to learn about environmental issues and contribute to the knowledge of our oceans.

Interested parties can accompany a Mote Marine Laboratory-trained Ritz-Carlton employee on a sunrise Beach Patrol, in search of tracks indicating that a nesting sea turtle came ashore the previous night. The complimentary walks are available to both guests of the hotel and the general public Sunday mornings through Sept. 25. Children are welcome but must be accompanied by a parent at all times.

The hotel provides a shuttle for participating guests departing from the hotel at 6:45 a.m. Others are asked to meet at the North Lido life-guard stand on Lido Key at 7 a.m. to join the walk. No reservations are required.

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the beaches of Sarasota County have the highest density of loggerhead turtle nesting on the west coast of Florida. With sea turtle populations declining worldwide due to beach development, commercial fishing and other human-related causes, protecting sea turtles and their habitat is crucial to their survival.

During sea turtle nesting season, staff and volunteers from Mote's Sea Turtle Conservation and Research Program patrol the 30 miles of beach, that includes Longboat Key, Lido Key, Siesta Key, Casey Key and Venice. When a turtle crawl is discovered, the turtle volunteer gathers location information and forwards that to a Mote staff member who then marks the nest so that it can be monitored until it hatches.

Last year, 797 nests were monitored and an estimated 33,672 eggs hatched. The

# The most rewarding folly of all

STORY BY JEREMY ROTTGEN • STAFF WRITER

Like a developing heart, the partnership between Venice Little Theatre and Loveland Center is growing every year.

This year's performance will be the 10th annual Loveland Follies show at Venice Little Theatre. Thirty-six participants from Loveland, a facility that works with people who have developmental disabilities or mental retardation, will perform for Venice at this year's show.

When the partnership first started, Yvonne Pinkerton was director of the show. Matt McCord, an actor in VLT's 2005 production of "To Kill A Mockingbird," took over as director last year. After 10 years, the show still has students from the first show in 1995.

The partnership started with a special grant from the Selby Foundation a decade ago. It was a special grant only given to an innovative partnership of two organizations.

This collaboration is nothing short of pioneering. This year the title of the program is "Lights, Camera, Loveland."

### Tenth folly in a row

This year's show is a review of classic movies. Matt McCord, who directed and scripted last year's "As Time Goes By," directed and scripted "Lights, Camera, Loveland," as well. McCord is one of the volunteers that meets with the students every Thursday.

"We all love the movies and so we decided to take a trip down movie memory lane," McCord said. "We picked songs, dances and routines from our favorite classic movies and put them together in a film festival format. The students really enjoy bringing their talent and enthusiasm to our 10th Loveland Follies."

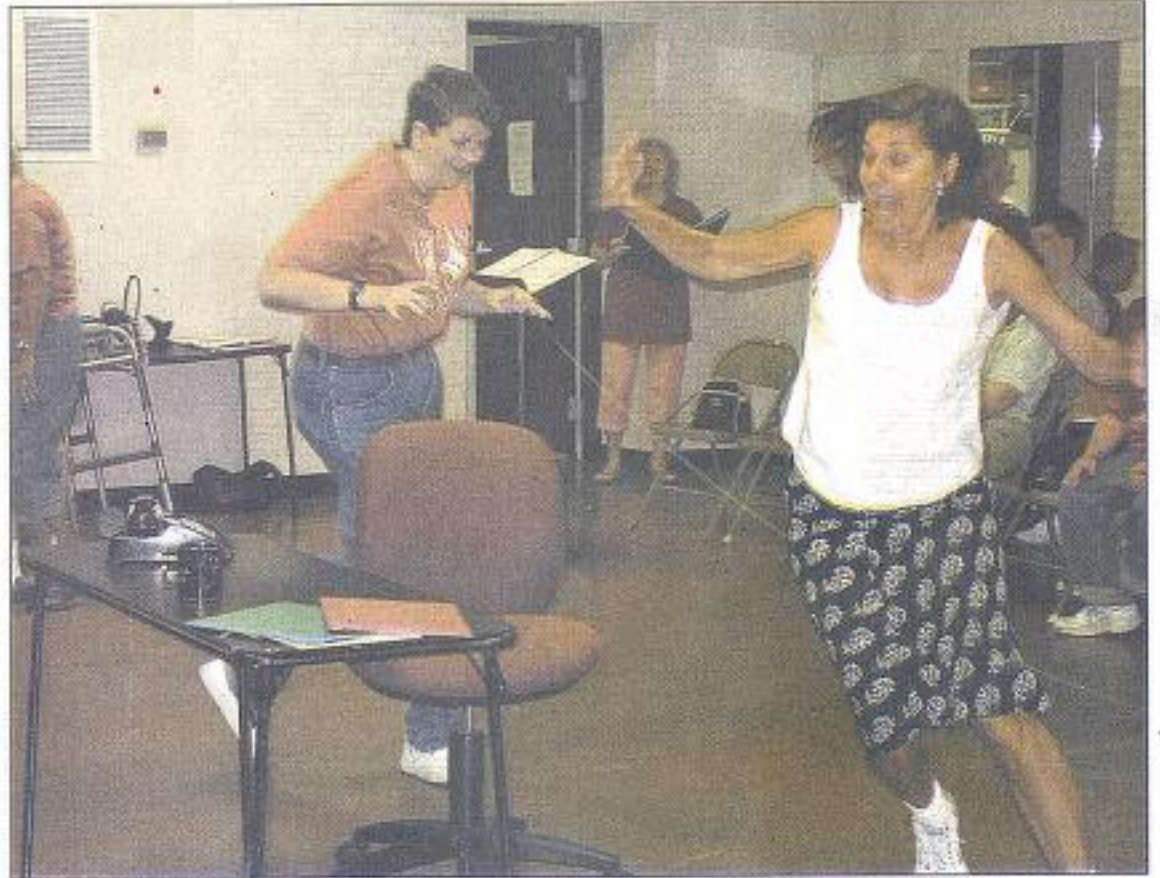
When the show began 10 years ago, it was an idea to bring two organizations together and see what the effects would be.

"It was a challenge grant offered to us from the Selby foundation and Dr. Perkins to work with a human service organization," Pinkerton said. "It's very well-supported by the community and a very well-respected organization."

In the beginning the partnership was practical, but since the show is 10 years in the making, relationships have been formed and lives have been touched by the collaboration.

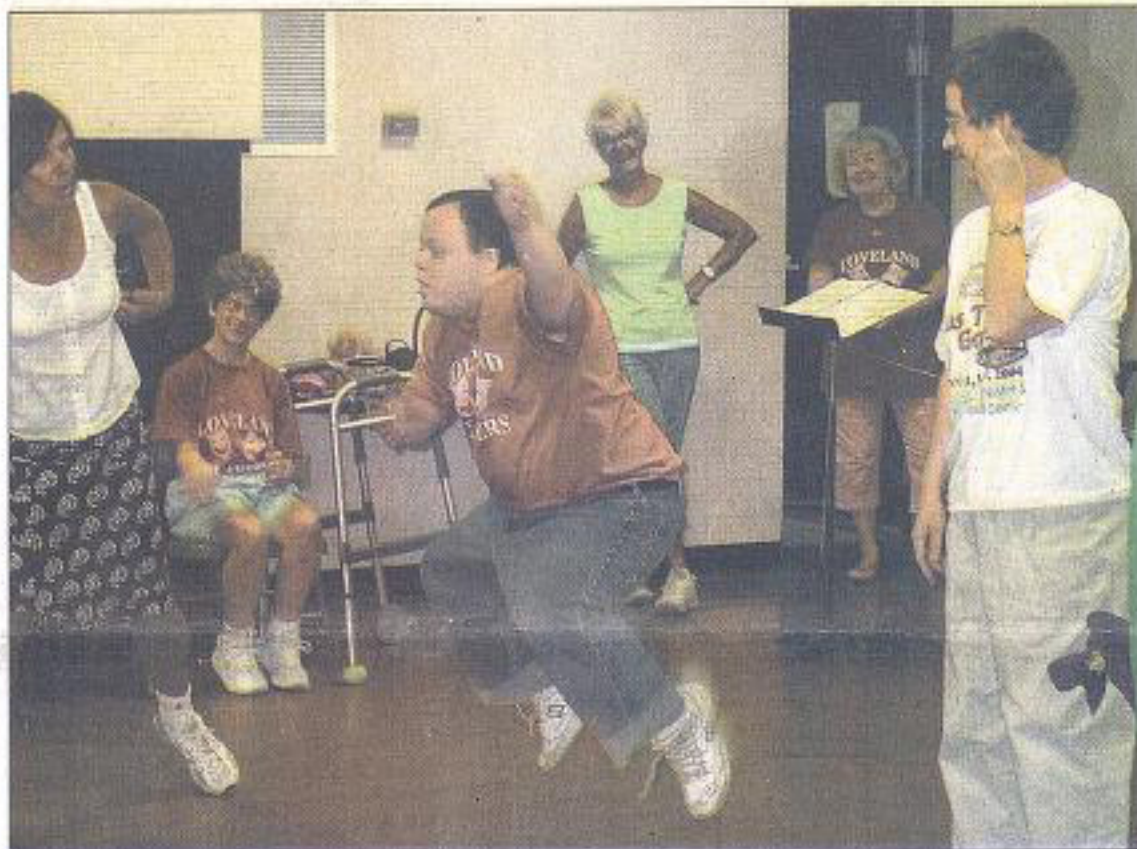


Tim Mahoney practices in his role as a boxer for the parody of the movie "Rocky."



Joey Foglietta chases Becky Holahan around a desk in a parody of "9 to 5."

SUN PHOTOS BY JEREMY ROTTGEN



Tim Hedley jumps in the air for his character during rehearsal.

"One of the main factors was that we would have to have something that could happen during the day because every night here is busy with rehearsals for the two stages and shows coming up; there's no room," Pinkerton said. "So, we had to have people coming in during the day. That would have to be adults."

Another factor was transportation to and from the theater. Loveland had the ability to supply buses for its students. There are three buses that carry all of the Loveland participants over to the VLT every morning.

Students from Loveland come to the theater every Thursday from October until May. It gives the students from Loveland and volunteers at VLT a time to share their talents with each other and with the public in the show.

The Loveland students are each given challenges with the show each year and individually each student is able to build upon it. Pinkerton said this makes every year special. The relationships between the students and volunteers become more significant every year.

In 2004 Artistic and Managing Director Murray Chase said, "Last year many of the same performers stood in the lobby and calmly critiqued their production.

That's true growth: the expectation of improvement and the objectivity to gauge it."

### Magic of sharing

"It's just such a rewarding experience," said Gina Schonfeld, adult day training manager at Loveland. She is also the choral director for the show. "We are making a difference to help them be the best they can be," she said. "There's a real depth of caring."

More goes on behind the scenes than preparation for the show. The bonding experience that Loveland and VLT have created includes time for relationships and a chance for closeness between volunteers and students.

"We usually have a sharing time before where everybody

### IF YOU GO

**WHEN:** 8 p.m. Saturday, June 11 and 2 p.m. Sunday, June 12  
**COST:** Tickets are \$10.  
**BENEFIT:** Proceeds support Loveland-VLT partnership.  
**INFO:** Call the box office at 488-1115.

can talk about something that happened to them that day," Schonfeld said. "They feel safe. Whether they fail, there's somebody there to help them and give them approval and support. It is a chance for them to excel and do their best. They know that there is caring there."

At the center, Schonfeld said whenever there is a break time the students want to practice their songs for the show. Schonfeld is always happy to comply.

All year long the students of Loveland practice and learn from VLT volunteers. The special part is how each person, in turn, affects each other. There is a huge list of changed lives involved with the project.

Debra Jacobs, president of the Selby Foundation, said the partnership between the two organizations is really something to be admired.

"The magical thing is how the actors and actresses change the volunteers," Jacobs said. "Partnerships between human services and arts organizations demonstrate the power of arts to change lives. Often the lives of those working with the students of Loveland experience personal growth as much as the students. There is nothing like the discipline of rehearsal and practice to create the magic of theater."

