



## COLONIAL FOX THEATRE FOUNDATION

# Green Room Newsletter

March 2008 - Volume 2, Issue 1

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## GRAND SHE WAS, GRAND SHE WILL AGAIN BE

She has taken two gracious steps — one into the past and one toward the future — as both the State and National Registries of Historic Places have granted our Colonial Fox Theatre the honor of being included in their rolls of places worthy of preservation.

Many, many people have worked to attain this honor for our Grande Dame but holding her hand the tightest was Dr. Joel Rhodes, Pittsburg native, Colonial Fox Theatre Foundation trustee, and associate professor of history at Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau.

Dr. Rhodes had previously written the theatre's State Historic Registry nomination, which was accepted in 2000. Last year he offered his assistance and began a year-long "labor-intensive and daunting" task of researching and writing the national nomination.

According to Dr. Rhodes, "The Colonial Fox Theatre's nomination

for the National Register of Historic Places was based primarily on its clear association with the historic architectural and cultural trends of theatre and entertainment venues in the twentieth century." A strong case had to be made for the theatre's central place in the business and cultural history of Pittsburg and, of Kansas as a whole, as well as ways in which its architectural styles exhibit characteristics of the movie palace in commercial districts of the United States during the 1920s and 30s. Many old and important buildings still exist but few are of such significance.

There are several ways in which State and National Register status will help the Foundation, not the least of which is that the prestige and honor stemming from the designations will lend credibility and legitimacy to our preservation efforts.

We offer our gratitude and thanks to Professor Rhodes for



working so diligently on behalf of our Grande Dame. He likens the highly selective process employed by the National Register, which is compiled and maintained by the United States Department of the Interior, to that employed by the Baseball Hall of Fame or similar societies of recognition. He commented, "The Colonial Fox will now join many of our nation's most famous and principal historic buildings."

## Colonial Fox Receives Pritchett Trust Grant

by Olive L. Sullivan

The Colonial Fox Theatre Foundation will receive \$90,000 over the next three years from the Pritchett Trust. The award was presented March 13 at a ceremony at M&I Bank in Pittsburg. CTF President Vonnie Corsini said the award is a wonderful affirmation for the Foundation. "For me, as much as for the money, it's the affirmation from such a prestigious body," she said. The Colonial Fox has been receiving state and national notice in recent weeks, and Corsini said this grant is a tangible result of all the hard work volunteers have done already.

She said that \$30,000 will be awarded this year, and part of the money will be used to replace the

roof on the 88-year-old Colonial Fox Theatre building. The current roof is made up mostly of patches, she explained. The total build-up of layers of roofing and tar patches is about two inches thick, and the weight is cutting into the available live load for the structure. The William Morris Architectural Firm has recommended removing the entire existing roof down to the deck and replacing it.

Corsini said she believes the Colonial Fox grant request was approved because the project fits so well with the mission of the Pritchett Trust.

The trust, which has distributed more than \$5 million, was

established by William and Athlyn Pritchett, and the first grants were awarded in 1995. The current mission statement of the trust is "... to improve the quality of life in Pittsburg and Crawford County by strengthening children, youth and families and by supporting projects that serve these populations." Corsini said the theatre's mission is to provide a central cultural gathering place that will be a nucleus for urban development. In addition, it will provide programs, services, and workshops that will benefit participants of all ages, especially children. Corsini believes that the renovated historic theatre will be the crowning jewel in the city of Pittsburg's

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*A note from:*

**Pat Jones**

*Public Relations Chair, Colonial Fox Theatre Foundation*

We're getting our money's worth and more. The money of which I speak is the \$100 the Colonial Fox Theatre Foundation spent for its membership in KHTA, the Kansas Historic Theatre Association. My first experience with KHTA was in September of 2007 when member theatres convened in Pittsburg for a bi-monthly meeting. Upon touring our facility they raved about what we have here in the existing Colonial Fox Theatre. It was a member theatre that put us in touch (that same day) with the gentlemen from American Seating who were instantly to provide us with history regarding our theatre seats. We learned much about the history of concession stands, carbon arc lighting in movie projection, and a plethora of other topics. That same wealth of information is standard for each KHTA meeting.

The first 2008 convening of the group took place in Hutchinson, beginning on the evening of Thursday, January 10, when we met for great BBQ and were then off to the fabulous Hutchinson Fox Theatre for a performance by Cherryholmes, an



internationally acclaimed bluegrass band. Mary Hemmings, executive director for the Hutchinson Fox Theatre, provided us with complimentary tickets, greeted us at the door, and acknowledged the organization from the stage.

The following day we reconvened at the Hutchinson Fox for our meeting with historic theatre representatives from throughout the state. As always, the round-robin discussion was fascinating as again and again it became obvious that we share similar goals, experience similar

challenges, and can look to one another for practical advice that comes from experience.

The camaraderie of fellow KHTA members is great, but their input on matters of business relevant to our theatre's success is even greater. KHTA membership continues to be an important influence as we move forward with the revitalization of the Colonial Fox! While traversing the state I encourage you to visit other members. A list of these members with links to their respective Web sites may be found at [www.khta.com](http://www.khta.com)

**CFTF Holds Annual Meeting**

The Colonial Fox Theatre Foundation held its second annual members meeting on January 15, 2008, at Parrot Bey, in Pittsburg. Vonnie Corsini, CFTF President, welcomed the members and called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. CFTF Treasurer Aaron Besperat gave a report on the organization's financial statements.

A Resolution of Appreciation was presented by President Corsini to "the five brave men [Brian Berndt, Paul Keys, Bob Berry, Randy Konek, and Jon Splitter] who, in the fall of 2006, while discussing the state of downtown Pittsburg, began creating a dream." She added, "They saw that the Colonial Fox was going to auction and went from talking about it to taking action." The spark started by those five men has brought



*Volunteers help prepare newsletters and annual meeting announcements on January 1, 2008. They stuffed, sealed, and stamped 1,000 newsletters and 500 annual meeting announcements in one hour.*

the Colonial Fox Theatre Foundation to where it is today. The Resolution will be recorded in the official minutes of the Colonial Fox Theatre Foundation. "From this day forward," said Corsini, "record of the contractors' extraordinary efforts to save the theatre will be available to all who research the history of the theatre."

The primary business of the Second Annual Meeting of the Colonial Fox Theatre Foundation was the election of a new slate of trustees. Dr. Joseph Grady Smoot, chair of the Nomination Committee, presented to the membership the nominees Bob Berry, Aaron Besperat, Vonnie Corsini, Ann Elliott, Kyle Fleming, Brad Hodson, Pat Jones, Rachel Patterson, Pam Phalen, Joel Rhodes, Joseph G. Smoot, Mark Turnbull, Marinelle Webber, and Talaat Yagmour. The members voted to accept the nominees as presented.

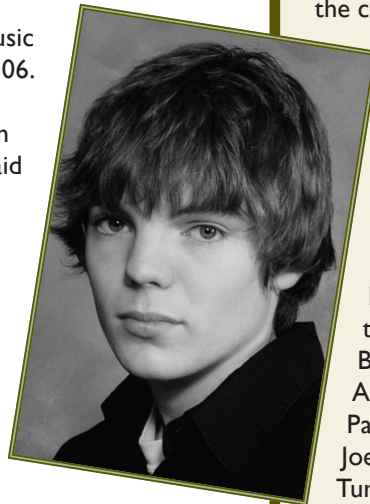
**Rising Talent Headlines Birthday Celebration**

Performing at the birthday celebration for the CFT will be southeast Kansas native Shane Duling. A Girard High School senior, Duling has been performing since he was a child. His father, Richard Duling, and various members of his immediate and extended family have performed as the Duling Family Band for years.

Two years ago, at age 15, Shane began composing his own music and was soon discovered during a songwriting workshop in 2006. Since then, he has signed a record deal with the label Center Creek Records and is beginning to gain interest nationally from others in the music business. "He has a very unique sound," said Janice Malan of Center Creek Records. "People can relate to his songs. They are not just for young kids or adults. They really appeal to everyone."

Shane recently won the Fine Arts in the Four States Senior Scholarship and Concert Award, from Fine Arts of the Four States. He and his band, 11:11, which includes friends and family members, have already cut a CD, and the singer/guitarist has another CD in the works.

Be sure to catch Shane Duling and the 11:11 Band at the 88 Candles Birthday Bash celebration at Parrot Bey on April 5, from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. where he will be headlining the event.



## Colonial Fox Members Benefit All of Pittsburg

by Olive L. Sullivan

Great things are happening in downtown Pittsburg, and Colonial Fox Theatre Foundation members are integral partners in it, according to Foundation President Vonnie Corsini. Corsini said the restored Colonial Fox, which she calls “an historic jewel,” will help anchor the revitalized downtown envisioned by city officials.

“We have got so much going on,” commented Pittsburg City Administrator Alan Gill. “It may seem a little trite, but we are changing the face of Pittsburg one piece at a time. The bottom line is that it will make downtown more appealing.” That, in turn, will attract more businesses and activity to the downtown area. “I think we will see a renewal of interest in business downtown,” he said.

Corsini said the Colonial Fox will be a very important part of the new downtown. She explained that a vibrant downtown will attract students who already like the university’s small campus feel but want a lively night scene such as they might find in Lawrence. Combining the small-town atmosphere with city-style cultural amenities will also help attract businesses to the region.

## Study Moves Beyond Bricks and Mortar

by Olive L. Sullivan

The CFTF is in the process of finding out what local residents want in a renovated Colonial Fox Theatre. Andrea Springer of Springer Coaching & Consulting, based in Hutchinson, is performing a market feasibility study. Springer is asking community members about the theatre and what types of events they would like to see come to the theatre.

She said the Colonial Fox Theatre Foundation has overcome the first hurdle, which was to save the building. The next step is to make sure the building is structurally sound. At the same time, it is important to talk with the public to gather their ideas about using the Colonial Fox; however, it is just as important to give them information about the project. “It lets them know that this Board of Trustees is very serious about doing things right,” she said. “It is important to gather as many opinions as possible — all ages, all backgrounds, really trying to get people’s input.”

This is not the first historic building project on which Springer has worked. She has been involved with many projects including the Hutchinson Fox Theatre in

She cited nationwide studies by the Kansas Historic Theatre Association. Conservative estimates show that each dollar spent at an historic theatre, such as the Colonial Fox, leverages to \$1.60 more that is spent at downtown restaurants and boutiques.” “There’s going to be all of this movement,” she said. “That’s what you call community interaction.”

While the city is doing its part by working on the infrastructure, Corsini said the Colonial Fox restoration will help provide the finish polish by providing a key center for arts, entertainment, and cultural activities. The theatre’s efforts will combine with those provided by the city’s Memorial Auditorium and Pittsburg State University’s proposed performing arts center to boost cultural offerings citywide.

“The arts just have to be supported,” she explained. CFTF members, even at the most basic level, make a huge difference, she said, urging those who supported the CFTF last year to renew their memberships.

“I know we are making an incredible impression

Hutchinson. She is also a founding member and vice president of the Kansas Historic Theatre Association. At the end of the market feasibility study process, Springer will submit a written report to the CFTF. She will then make recommendations based on the findings. Springer said it is easy to become seduced by the building itself, but it is important to remember the project is not about the bricks and mortar. The bricks and mortar are vehicles for what happens inside. “It is not called ‘show art,’ it’s called ‘show business,’” she added. “The Board’s responsibility is to make sure that the governance is set up and money is raised and continues to be raised, so that you can program things that this community wants to see.”

The feasibility study should be completed by the end of March. Contact Springer at [andrea@springercoachingandconsulting.com](mailto:andrea@springercoachingandconsulting.com).

on statewide organizations,” she said, explaining that major funding organizations such as the Kansas Historical Society, the League of Historic American Theatres, and Crawford County’s own Pritchett Trust look closely at local support when they consider grant requests.

Corsini said that 467 participating purchasers contributed \$100 each last year to help purchase the building and fund emergency stabilization. She hopes that each of those people will be willing to recommit this year. Ideally, they would commit to an annual contribution that would give the Foundation a stable financial base from which to operate.

Corsini said continuing community participation and input is vital to the success of the Colonial Fox. Members help set the direction of the organization with their votes.

*Olive L. Sullivan is a freelance writer and editor. She can be reached at [olive@olivesullivan.com](mailto:olive@olivesullivan.com).*



*Andrea Springer talks to LaStacia Ross, owner of the Wishing Tree, about the Colonial Fox Theatre. Springer is in Pittsburg to help the CFTF with a market feasibility study.*

## Grant

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efforts to revitalize downtown. “Having a historic theatre downtown is going to facilitate that vision,” Corsini said. “It will draw people downtown from throughout the local area. One need only read a few of the many memory statements collected from community members of all ages regarding the Colonial Fox Theatre to recognize the significant influence a lively downtown theatre has on the life of the community.”

## 88 Candles!

We're having a party and we want you to help blow out the 88 candles on the Colonial Fox Theatre's birthday cake. Festivities, which will include a birthday cake decorating competition between the best bakers and decorators in the area, will begin at 7:00 P.M. at Parrot Bey, 408 North Locust Street, Pittsburg.

The night will be filled with the sounds of Shane Duling and the 11:11 band. KKOW will broadcast a live remote from Parrot Bey and KOAM will be on site during the party.

Everyone is invited to this family-friendly birthday celebration to help the Grande Dame put on a new pair of shoes and walk into the future with the Colonial Fox Theatre Foundation.



### COLONIAL FOX THEATRE FOUNDATION

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## COLONIAL FOX THEATRE FOUNDATION PRESENTS

# 88 Candles Birthday Bash

**Saturday, April 5  
7-10 p.m. | Parrot Bey**

408 N. Locust, Pittsburg

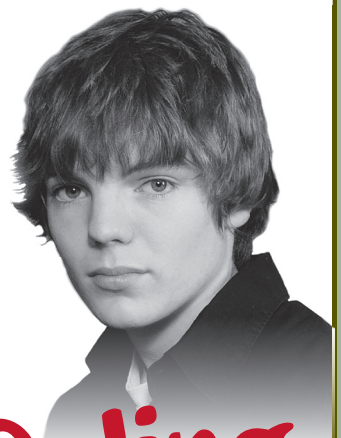
**7-8 p.m.** Birthday cake contest,  
live radio remote by KKOW  
and TV coverage KOAM

**8-10 p.m.** Concert

**Tickets** \$10 single, \$15 couples,  
ages 10 & under free

### Tickets available:

M&I Bank in Pittsburg  
CFTF Office, Tues. & Thurs. 3-5 p.m.  
Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce  
99.1 FM / Love Bubble  
Girard Chamber of Commerce  
Exchange Bank in Girard



# Shane Duling and The 11:11 Band

The mission of the Colonial Fox Theatre Foundation is to enhance and encourage the spirit of the Pittsburg area through the preservation and utilization of the Colonial Fox Theatre.