

AGGIE life

THURSDAY
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All the World's A Stage

'Nspiration Station continues its Shakespeare Festival with the production of Hamlet this weekend

By Michael Cordova
THE BATTALION

For some, the works of William Shakespeare are just a few poetic words from an old writer. But for many others, they kindle a romance with one of history's most famous and intriguing playwrights.

In an attempt to recapture some of the Shakespearean magic, 'Nspiration Academy of Bryan is producing a series of plays by the 16th century playwright.

The fourth annual Shakespeare Festival kicked off earlier this month, directed by Randy

Wilson. The Festival, which has three productions that run until the end of August, will be produced solely by Bryan-College Station community members.

His productions have required a variety of volunteers and have often had a few unusual twists in several plays.

"We work solely from volunteers," Wilson said. "We are a community-based theater. One time, we had two full families on-stage at the same time."

The plays' casts are mainly comprised of families and individuals from the community. They have also interested many A&M students and aspiring actors.

"We usually take auditions five to six weeks in advance," Wilson said. "We place ads in the local newspapers so everyone who wants to can come out and get a chance to read. The productions usually take six weeks to produce."

The community organization has also helped propel others to

greater heights.

Three actors who participated in 'Nspiration Station productions have furthered their acting careers.

"Since I've been here, we had one person move to L.A., one who is attending Circle Rep (an acting school) in New York and another who has just been accepted to Circle Rep," Wilson, a Broadway veteran, said.

Wilson, who has been with 'Nspiration Station for the past three-and-a-half years, also directs the other two plays in the festival.

Nellwyn Haley of the Brazos Valley Arts Council said two other plays will be produced to accompany *Hamlet* in the Shakespeare Festival.

"As You Like It — a youth production — and *Comedy of Errors* will run later this summer," Haley said. "Meanwhile, *Hamlet* is already underway."

Wilson said he enjoys producing Shakespeare's works.

"We are doing Shakespeare because it is a quality production,"

Wilson said. "Also because we don't have to pay any royalties."

People involved in the plays are not the only ones who enjoy the productions. Many community members are fans as well.

Justin Lindley, a junior agronomy major, said he is glad he had the opportunity to attend some of the plays.

"Last fall, I went to a couple of plays and I really enjoyed it," Lindley said. "Hopefully, I can get out there this year and catch a few more."

'Nspiration Station has also produced other popular plays and musicals.

Last season's productions of *Annie, Oliver, and The Sound of Music* were all sellouts.

The Brazos Valley Arts Council funds 'Nspiration Station and the Shakespeare Festival along with 21 other groups. Later this year, 'Nspiration Station will produce community favorites like *Fiddler on the Roof* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and they will end the year with *Camelot*.



Pat James, THE BATTALION

Elaine Banks, owner of Earth's First Farms in Manor East Mall, displays some of the edible uses for industrial hemp.

Manor East Mall boutique finds use for hemp in shoes, shirts, hacky sacks

By Michael Cordova
THE BATTALION

Despite all the negative stereotypes and illegal uses of marijuana, some versions of the drug are used for productive and helpful reasons.

With all the negative notoriety accompanying hemp, Elaine Banks, owner of Earth's First Farms, has seen the plant's useful side.

Her Manor East Mall boutique, sells products made from the earthy material, has gained quite a following from its customers.

"At first I was unaware of what to expect," says Banks. "But so far, almost everyone who has come in has said they like the store."

Her cozy boutique contains various products made from industrial hemp. Hiking boots, hacky sacks and shirts made from the material adorn the inside of her store.

"Our most popular products are our men's shirts," she said. "Guys come in and they want something that will last for five to ten years. Our shirts do that."

Banks envisioned opening a hemp store to combat some of the social ills associated with

the material, as well as using her hemp products as an alternative to trees.

She said hemp has been given a harsh reputation because of its illegal uses.

"Just because marijuana has a negative connotation associated with it doesn't mean that hemp has to be labeled as a black sheep as well," she says. "Hemp is a good crop because it is drought-resistant and replaces nutrients into the soil."

"So far, almost everyone who has come in has said they like the store."

— ELAINE BANKS
owner of Earth's First Farms

Banks said hemp is also a sturdy material for products.

"The clothes that have hemp in them can be treated just like cotton," she said. "You can just throw them into the dryer when you wash."

Other than 100 percent hemp clothing, her stores also sell many other items.

"We sold out of some things, but along

with the clothes we sell a lot of fun items," she said. "Frisbees with hemp seeds on the edges, baseball caps, backpacks and wallets are also selling."

In order to open and stock her two-month-old store, Banks traveled to Los Angeles to view two new hemp stores that opened earlier this year.

She said at times it is difficult to find different merchandise for her store because of the lack of available products.

"The catalogs I buy from have about two or three pages worth of merchandise," Banks said.

During her recent trip to California, she noticed only two out of about 1,500 outfits made from hemp.

For now, Banks who also owns Elaine's, an ice cream shop and deli, ponders the possibility of moving to a larger, more accessible store.

She said that she hopes to move somewhere closer for more visibility.

"I want to move to a location closer to the students, but for now it might be better to stay put and establish the business here," she said.

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A TIME TO KILL (R)	12:00 3:30 7:00 10:30
INDEPENDENCE DAY (PG-13)	(on three screens)
1.	11:30 3:00 6:30 10:10
2.	12:15 3:25 7:15 10:40
3.	7:50 10:50
MULTIPLICITY (PG-13)	11:00 1:30 4:10 7:15 10:15
FLED (R)	11:10 1:35 3:55 6:55 9:50
COURAGE UNDER FIRE (R)	(on two screens)
1.	1:15 4:10 7:15 10:15
2.	11:00 1:45 4:45 8:00 10:45
HARRIET THE SPY (PG)	11:35 2:10 4:45
THE NUTTY PROFESSOR (PG-13)	(on two screens)
1.	11:45 2:45 5:30 7:55 10:25
2.	12:15 2:30 4:55 7:10 10:00
KAZAAM (PG)	11:20 1:40 4:15 6:45 9:45
STRIPTSEASE (R)	11:00 1:30 4:25 7:30 10:15
THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME (G)	11:30 1:45 4:00 7:05 9:30
THE ROCK (R)	11:05 2:00 4:55 7:50 10:55
LONE STAR (NR)	11:00 4:20 10:45
TWISTER (PG-13)	1:55 7:05

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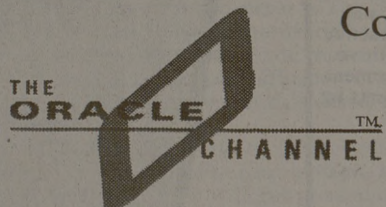
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