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Facility repairs force Wilton Playshop to cancel 'A Christmas Story'

By Janice Dehn — The Wilton Playshop



The cast of 'A Christmas Story' won't get to perform this season, but repair work on the Wilton Playshop should improve future performances, officials said.

The Wilton Playshop will be closed for about six month because of damage to the building, said Zellie Pforzheimer, president of the playshop. She made the announcement on Wednesday, Oct. 3.

Since Ms. Pforzheimer and the board of directors were installed in June, they and several volunteers have spent countless hours at the playshop, cleaning, and organizing set pieces, lighting equipment, props, and costumes. This effort extended to a professional inspection of the playshop, where water damage was discovered, further aggravated by a roof in dire need of repair and gutters that had not been cleaned and that were installed incorrectly, causing further damage to some of the annexes to the main stage area, officials of the playshop said.

“The entire wall of the annex needs to be rebuilt. All of the supporting beams have rotted through and must be replaced,” Ms. Pforzheimer wrote to members of the board of directors. “The only thing holding up that side of the building is an interior wall that divides the backstage area and the costume closet. No one can access that

area until it is completely rebuilt ... it is currently braced with two-by-fours to prevent it from collapsing ...”

On Thursday, Oct. 4, Director Rich Mancini joined board members to announce to the cast of “A Christmas Story” the decision to postpone. Mr. Mancini apologized for the news, but promised that every cast member would keep his or her part until next year, when the board is committed to producing the holiday show.

The board of the Wilton Playshop will continue its fund-raising efforts to make the required repairs.

“We estimate the cost of these and other needs to be close to \$250,000,” said Jane Alexander, a board member who has been overseeing the construction team that discovered the damage. “That includes roof repairs, the new beams and walls, as well as a new floor and window reglazing. We keep finding things that must be addressed as our work progresses.”

The board will convene within a week to determine the next steps, which include townwide fund-raising and the year’s major undertaking, the off-site benefit show in February or March.

Information: Zellie Pforzheimer at [Pforzd@aol.com](mailto:Pforzd@aol.com) or the Wilton Playshop at 762-7629.