



Wayne County Productions

From Humble Beginnings to Untouchable Entertainment

by Molly O'Hearon

The famous actress Bette Davis once said, "Without wonder and insight, acting is just a trade. With it, it becomes creation". Wayne County Productions (WCP) is exactly that, a creation of the hard work, dedication and collaboration of extraordinary people.

Since the 1980's, the people of Wayne County Productions have spent countless hours and put forth limitless efforts to create what we know today as "The Best Little Music Show in Georgia." Wayne County Productions began when the well-known Carl Gill Productions acting group chose Jesup as one of its stops on a tour around the United States. The company brought its own costumes, sets and props, and Wayne County provided the entertainers. The costumes were "wet from sweat" from the previous city and the shows were "nothing

like the caliber of singing we have now," says Patti Martin, an executive director of WCP. The proceeds from the Carl Gill shows were split evenly with fifty percent going to Carl Gill Productions and fifty percent going to the good people of Wayne County. After a few years of these performances, the entertainers decided they could increase profits, by running a show on their own.

The early days of Wayne County Productions were known as "Hee Haw." These performances were strictly "good ole' hometown talent," said Laura Owens, also executive director of WCP. The evening included numbers, such as, Dolly Parton's "Two Doors Down," featured characters like Minnie Pearl, from the television show Hee Haw, and Mama from Mama's Family. At \$2 a ticket, the first "Hee Haw"

production was a success in its day. Martin says "We were almost in danger of getting in trouble with the fire marshal because people were putting chairs into the aisles to see the show." Before "Hee Haw," there was no organized entertainment group in Wayne County. People were just "starved for fun," says Owens.

The community had never seen anything like this show and it was an overnight success. Over the past 20 or so years, Wayne County has watched these productions grow and develop into matchless comedic performances that are fun for the entire family. With extravagant sets and carefully chosen music line-ups, "the Best Little Music Show in Georgia" is something that Wayne County will remember forever.

From the early days of "Hee Haw," to well-executed productions, Wayne County Productions has provided much needed fun and entertainment for the community. "The Best Little Music Show in Georgia," as it is known today, includes every type of entertainment imaginable, such as, country, rock and roll, slapstick comedy, gospel, folk, and much more. The organization has received positive publicity from Wayne County residents, as well as throughout the Southeast. "We rely mainly on Word of Mouth," says Owens. Audiences come from all over the Southeast, with a large Savannah crowd on Saturday night performance. The show is typically held every year, with the exact dates varying, depending on the schedule of Raymier, the booking of the Wayne County High School auditorium and performers work schedules. It is usually held in either the spring or fall. However, this year the WCP will not be able to produce a show at all.

The incredible level of commitment of each and every performer is what made WCP such a success for so many years. The organization becomes a part of life instilled into families that participate. Owens tells the story of Roger Anderson's family, who has three generations of children that have participated in the productions. "Wayne County Productions has always been like a family," says Owens. One aspect that most people do not know about WCP is the financial impact that it has on so many





organizations. The organization contributes to more than 17 local organizations and provides three annual scholarships for local graduating seniors. "We are one thing, but we trickle down to so many," says Martin. The performers enjoy doing what they do and do so that they may better the community. The performers in WCP give gladly their time, money and hearts for six months of rehearsal to make the production the best it can be.

From the first day of auditions to the time the curtain finally comes up, the directors, producers and performers work relentlessly rehearsing each act countless times until it meets the standards of WCP. The job of the directors is done by the night of the first show, but moments before the curtain rises, Laura Owens can still be found checking every microphone and making sure musician is in his or her place. That kind of dedication is exactly what makes the organization a creation that is forever changing the Wayne County community.

+TNCM