

Honing his craft

Play's the thing for student performing community service

This year, Sean Brannon will perform more than 300 hours of community service in the form of 160 shows through the Books Come Alive program at Stage Right.

Stage Right, a performing arts school and professional theater company in Greensburg, selects eight or nine children's books each season and adapts them into short mini-musicals to be performed for children at libraries in Westmoreland County.

This season's schedule includes adaptations of classics such as "Oh, the Places You'll Go" by Dr. Seuss as well as more current successes such as "Fancy Nancy" and "The Posh Puppy" by Jane O'Connor.

Brannon said the Books Come Alive Program serves to introduce books to kids in a more interactive way, helping to pique their interest in reading.

The program not only allows Brannon the opportunity to become involved in his community, but also to develop his craft as an aspiring actor.

"It's a great way to improve upon myself as an actor because kids are the toughest audience," Brannon said. "You can tell



KAYLA WASHKO

tribdem@tribdem.com

whether or not they're entertained by the way they move during the show."

Brannon, now a senior at Saltsburg High School, said he became involved with Stage Right through the suggestion of a cast mate during a middle school production of the musical "Oliver."

Though hesitant at first, Brannon emphasizes that it was a decision that ultimately "changed his life."

Since joining Stage Right, Brannon has distinguished himself in a number of roles, including that of The Mad Hatter in "Alice in Wonderland" and Jean Valjean, the leading male role in the musical "Les Misérables," based upon Victor Hugo's 1862 novel of the same name.

"(Jean Valjean) was my favorite role because when I joined Stage Right, the first show I did was 'Les Mis,'" said Brannon. "It was such a weird feeling to be playing the same role as my mentor four years ago. It really brought my experience (as an actor) full circle."

Brannon's next role will be in Stage Right's production of "The Wizard of Oz," playing Sept. 12-14 at the Palace Theater in Greensburg.

Brannon is the 2008 recipient of The Challenge Program's Most Community Service and Highest G.P.A. Awards at Saltsburg High School.

This article is part of a human interest series that will feature past recipients of The Challenge Program's four award categories: Most Improved, Best G.P.A., Most Community Service and Best Attendance. The Challenge Program is a nonprofit organization located in Johnstown that provides financial incentives to students for successes they achieve while still in high school. The Challenge Program also aims to provide a bridge between high-school students and the local business community.