



Carr Family Makes Major Financial Commitment to Drayton Entertainment

St. Jacobs Country Playhouse Auditorium to be Named in Honour

Tuesday, October 12, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – With the visionary support of area residents **Brad Carr** and **Susan Wagler**, award-winning **Drayton Entertainment** will build on its artistic programs to help serve established, current, and future audiences.

The West Montrose couple have made a multi-year commitment totalling **\$500,000** in support of Drayton Entertainment’s new Youth Academy training facility, which will serve as a hub for its expanding arts education initiatives, as well as operations and programming support as part of the not-for-profit charitable organization’s multi-year recovery effort following the devastating COVID-19 pandemic.

In return, the St. Jacobs Country Playhouse Auditorium will be named *The Carr Family Auditorium*.

“We have watched as Drayton Entertainment’s programs have expanded over the last few years to include people at all ages and stages of life,” says Brad Carr. “In particular, opportunities have increased exponentially for young people to be exposed to the arts through arts education, engagement, and outreach. Our family is excited to be part of the process as more youth throughout the province learn and grow under this new umbrella.”

The Carr family has a long history of supporting Drayton Entertainment. They have been faithfully attending productions at the St. Jacobs Country Playhouse since its opening in 2005. Brad and Susan are actively engaged in the community, supporting Lisaard and Innisfree Hospice, MCC, and KidsAbility, among other charitable organizations and causes.

“This vital support will set us up for another 30 years of success as we continue adapting and evolving our acclaimed theatre model beyond live theatre experiences to include other related activities, such as inspiring and empowering the next generation of artists onstage and behind-the-scenes, as well as providing positive experiences, which transcend the arts to shape future leaders and community-minded citizens,” says **Alex Mustakas**, Artistic Director of Drayton Entertainment.

Drayton Entertainment's Youth Academy is currently under construction at 145 Northfield Dr. W. in Waterloo. The **\$3 million** project will transform an industrial warehouse into 10,000 sq. ft. of cultural infrastructure including rehearsal halls, classrooms, music rooms, acting studios, and more. Students will also have access to Drayton Entertainment's adjacent Production Centre for the Technical Arts, generating thousands of hours of new arts activity every year.

The Academy will provide a safe place where youth feel empowered to share their ideas and feelings regarding race, gender, ancestry, language, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, disability, thinking styles, opinions, and life experiences.

A Tuition Bursary Endowment Fund will be implemented to remove the cultural, economic, communication, and physical barriers which impede participation for marginalized and underrepresented groups, including youth identifying as Black, Indigenous, and/or Persons of Colour (BIPOC), LGBTQ+, new Canadians, and Persons with Disabilities.

The donation from the Carr family is an important springboard for this ongoing fundraising effort. A grassroots capital campaign is underway to raise the remaining funds to complete the project. Drayton Entertainment's future programming plans will be announced in the coming weeks.

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About Drayton Entertainment

Drayton Entertainment is an award-winning, not-for-profit charitable organization (12591 1313 RR0001) operating seven live theatrical venues in five unique Ontario locations – the original Drayton Festival Theatre in Drayton, Huron Country Playhouse (Mainstage and South Huron Stage) in Grand Bend, King's Wharf Theatre in Penetanguishene, St. Jacobs Country Playhouse and Schoolhouse Theatre in St. Jacobs, and the Hamilton Family Theatre in Cambridge.

With over 400 artist contracts issued annually, Drayton Entertainment is one of the largest employers of professional artists in the country – across all artistic disciplines. The organization's sustainable theatre model has emerged as a powerful force for culture and tourism in Ontario, and has been recognized by the office of the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario as well as the Ontario Innovation Excellence Awards.

Drayton Entertainment produces 18 productions annually, resulting in over 800 individual performances per season across its 7 stages. Pre-pandemic, the organization was on track to reach a paid attendance record of 275,000, with an anticipated economic impact of \$82.8 million in multiple communities. The live theatre company continues to follow government and public health guidelines for indoor gatherings, and is working on reopening plans.