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theStage

ENTERTAINMENT LANCASTER

Fulton Youtheatre tells stories of heartbreak, healing

BY JANE HOLAHAN
Staff Writer

Try to imagine.

You are a teenager and your mother's boyfriend sexually abuses you.

She chooses her boyfriend over you.

Your once-loving father is lost in crack addiction.

Your mother throws a boiling pot of water on your face as punishment for some crime you didn't even know you committed.

For many kids in the foster care system, it's not about imagining. It's their real life.

Their stories are told in the Fulton Youtheatre's show, "The Heart Knows Something Different," which will be performed at the Fulton today through Sunday.

Over the last two summers, the cast of 35 teenagers in the Youtheatre troupe have developed the show from a book by the same name. It is a compilation of oral histories from teens living in the foster care system.

"The book is the foundation, but the kids go from there," explains Adele Ulrich, a director of Youtheatre along with Barry Kornhauser. "For some kids in the cast, these are their stories."

Many of the members of Youtheatre have their own harrowing issues to deal with. Some have

Fulton Youtheatre
"The Heart Knows Something Different"
Today at noon and 4 p.m.,
Sat. 10 a.m.; Sun. 7 p.m.
Fulton Opera House
12 N. Prince St., 397-7425
www.thefulton.org

been abused, others arrested. Some have serious medical problems from bipolar disorders to clinical depression. Others have been in the foster care system themselves.

"For many of the kids, this is a sanctuary," says Kornhauser. "Someone is finally listening to them. And they are asked to be advocates for a cause. Some of them are never asked to do anything for someone else."

"They literally find their voices if they engage," says Ulrich. And the kids respond.

"The Heart Knows Something Different," is vibrant and alive. Some of the kids are naturals on stage, some have great ideas, some thrive with improvisation.

"We've got 35 directors," Kornhauser says with a laugh.

They've brought together a strong, vibrant show.

Some of the stories may be



Marty Heisey / Staff

Shantelle Cornish in a scene from the Fulton Youtheatre's "The Heart Knows Something Different" (left); The cast of the show (below).

downbeat, but the show isn't.

The cast brings music and movement to it along with comic moments, like when kids complain about always getting chicken for dinner.

"They incorporate ideas, like feeling like a pinball, or following the story of Hansel and Grete, whose parents cast them out into the forest.

Some kids have loving, wonderful foster parents who change their lives for the best.

Yes, others aren't as lucky, but they insist on being heard, on speaking out.

The kids you meet are often funny and clever, their stories are told with little bitterness and a great deal of wisdom.

Certain things shine through the horror stories: Resilience, humor and that most important of all possessions, hope.

Yes, it will break your heart, but you'll also find healing in that heart as well.

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Marty Heisey / Staff

Two question and answer periods will be held today, after the noon and 4 p.m. performances.

After the noon show, Al Destta, the editor of the book "The Heart Knows Something Different" will attend the performance and lead a Q&A afterward. Some of the teens who were interviewed for the book may be attending as well.

After the 4 p.m. show, Crystal Gingrich, executive director for the Lancaster County Children and Youth agency will attend and then lead a discussion afterward.