

# O'Hara expands Theater Program

TONAWANDA — Students at Cardinal O'Hara High School are experiencing a new opportunity to join theater. The comedy, "Anne Arky" by Lindsay Price scheduled Nov. 29 and 30, will be the first fall play performed in the school's history and will join the annual spring musical, expanding the drama and performance opportunities for students.

Directed by Lori Panaro, O'Hara's new English, Computer Tech and ESL teacher, the show will revive the Drama Club.

"Having a fall play introduces a theater program for those who can't sing or dance but want to do theater," Panaro said. "I'm excited for the students and surprised by the number of students who signed up."

The comedy is about a high school drama club preparing for their opening night of "Anne of Green Gables."

The performance starts out normally enough. But when a rumor spreads that there is an acting agent in the audience, the students scramble to be discovered.

Anarchy ensues! Wigs fall off, ankles are sprained and the stage manager sets fire to the prompt script. After the dust clears, the true identity of the agent is revealed.

"The fun about this play is that it is about high school students playing high school students," Panaro explained.

Panaro's background is in theater as she has a BFA degree in theater from Niagara University as well as an MBA in education and administration, more than qualifies her for the current role as director. She performs for Niagara Regional Theater Guild and the Towne Players of Ken-Ton and last year, was a long-term substitute teacher at Cardinal O'Hara.

Performing in this play is a teaching experience, Panaro explained as she is teaching character and scene study as part of the show experience. Additionally, the stage crew, directed by Lyn Porcelli, O'Hara chemistry teacher, includes two students, a senior and a freshman, as well as students who will work on sets and costumes.

"We are thrilled to have the opportunity for



COURTESY OF CARDINAL O'HARA HIGH SCHOOL

Some of the cast members who will take part in "Anne Arky" gather around director Lori Panaro as they look over the script. The students, all freshmen, are (from left) Brigid Benson, Julianna Martin, Mateo Curtis, Caden Tag and Lydia Johnston. The comedy will be presented Nov. 29 and 30 at Cardinal O'Hara High School and is the first fall play presented in the school's history.

our students to take part in a fall play under the direction of Mrs. Panaro," Principal Mary Holzerland said. "This is the first time in the history of the school that our many gifted student actors have had the opportunity to take part in a dramatic performance. Mrs. Panaro brings a wealth of experience to the program, based

upon her own acting and directing background, that will make this year's drama even more memorable for our student performers."

In education, Panaro explained, theater is referred to as multiple Intelligence with 10 ways it impacts students: naturalist (nature smart), musical (sound smart), logical-mathematical (number/reasoning smart), existential (life smart), interpersonal (people smart), bodily kinesthetic (body smart), linguistic (word smart) and intra-personal (self smart).

In addition to the show, Panaro and Porcelli will take the students to see plays and musicals at other area high schools to give them an opportunity to support other theater programs and teach them to observe and critique actors in these shows.

"Having a strong theater program is more than just putting on a show," Panaro said. "It's a teaching experience that increases a student's presentation skills, builds confidence and interviewing skills — it's a whole process."