

The show will go on — New digital projector will keep movies at Hayesville Opera House

By IRV OSLIN / T-G Correspondent, Posted Sep 13, 2017 at 4:20 PM



Hayesville Opera House Renovation Board president Dave Roepke poses with new digital movie projector at the Hayesville Opera House, Photo courtesy of T-G

HAYESVILLE — The show must go on. And, thanks to the generosity of the community and the State of Ohio, it will.

The Hayesville Opera House got its newly acquired digital movie projector up and running the last weekend of August. The 131-year-old venue will screen weekend movies on a regular basis.

In early August, the financial picture was completed with the release of nearly \$18,000 in state funding. The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission Cultural Facilities Grant, combined with about \$12,000 raised through individual donations and foundation grants, enabled Hayesville Opera House Renovation Board president Dave Roepke to purchase the projector. The amount of funding also allowed him to add a much-needed sound system.

To be eligible for the state grant, the Opera House had to raise matching funds. That was provided through the **Ashland County Community Foundation**, the Hugo H. and Mabel B. Young Foundation and individual donors using the online site GoFundMe. It also required the Opera House to obtain a 10-year lease on the second-floor facility from the Village of Hayesville, which owns the building.

Roepke praised the village, the foundations, individual donors and the state for coming through to support what he believes is an important historical and cultural asset. He credited State Sen. Larry Obhof (R-Medina) for being instrumental in securing the state grant.

About 12 years ago, the Opera House started screening first-run movies in 35mm film format. That became obsolete. After 2010, movie studios started to phase out film prints in favor of digital format. That left historical community venues such as the Opera House and Loudonville's Ohio Theatre reeling. Ohio Theatre acquired its digital projector in late 2015. The Opera House movies were eventually discontinued with the exception of occasional attempts to screen them using the DVD format.

The new projector will enable Roepke to show movies every weekend. He plans to run each feature two weekends in a row to give those who missed the initial showings a chance to see them. He also hopes to screen a few films on the day of their release. He was encouraged by the turnout for the “Wonder Woman” screenings.

Roepke indicated that the movies will never be a big moneymaker, but they help the nonprofit venue’s bottom line. The movies also will get people into the Opera House, including some of the tourists who flock into southern Ashland County in the summer months.

“With venues like this, there isn’t much money to be made,” he said. “It’s mostly done as a community service. I think that’s why they built the opera house in the first place.” They did show movies back then. They were silent films and no sound system was required. Except for a piano perhaps.

A movie schedule is available on the Hayesville Opera House website — <http://userpages.bright.net/~opera/hayesville/>.