

## "The Guys" Commemorates, Benefits

Written by Jill Walsh

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When Zach Pethoud read the script of *The Guys* by Anne Nelson, he decided it was an opportunity he couldn't turn down. "I knew right away that if I didn't direct it locally, someone else would," he said. So the Bettendorf native gathered a cast, secured the Bettendorf High School auditorium stage, and worked hard to put together the Quad Cities premiere of the play, which will be presented weekends from December 6 to 14.

Nelson's play hasn't just made a splash with stage directors such as Pethoud. The play was written and released within months of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and was first performed by Bill Murray and Sigourney Weaver. (A movie starring Weaver and Anthony LaPaglia has also been released, and CNN reviewer Paul Clinton said it is "a truly moving experience, and a perfect example of how art – when done right – can help heal, clarify, and comfort." Though America is still constantly bombarded with reminders of September 11 on the television screen and in magazines, Nelson's stage play commemorates the tragic events through the more intimate medium of theatre.

The plot focuses on a New York City fire captain, Nick, who must write eulogies for eight firefighters who died in the World Trade Center towers on September 11. The captain struggles with his emotions and for the right words, then ends up hiring a professional writer, Joan, to help him with the project. Over the course of the action, Joan and the captain develop a relationship that is both unexpected and therapeutic.

Pethoud said Nelson's script appealed to him because "I lived in New York prior to the terrorist attacks and the play struck close to home for me." The work is important as a reminder of America's recent tragic history and as an emotionally moving piece of art. Pethoud said his lead actors, Susan McDonald and Rick Koehler, were so eager to work on *The Guys* that they had already memorized their parts for the first rehearsal, which for most directors is an absolute dream.

Though Pethoud has put a lot of time and effort into staging *The Guys* locally, it's the community that will benefit from the production. Proceeds from the performances will be divided among four major Quad Cities fire departments to be used for fire education. Pethoud has also

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prepared a pre-play slide show, which includes photographs of the actual firefighters who died in the September 11 attacks.

*The Guys will be presented at Bettendorf High School on December 6,7, and 13 at 8 p.m. and December 8 and 14 at 2 p.m. A \$5 suggested donation is requested.*