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Why Not Build Parks Outside the City

9/13/07 by Novi Council Member Andrew Mutch

The editorial "Keep City Parks Inside the City" asks "Why would we buy land outside of Novi for our parks?" My response is "Why not?"

There is no question that there is a need today to acquire land for active recreational use. Contrary to what the editorial implies, we don't have enough parkland to meet the needs of our active sports community. The Parks department has documented how much the existing fields are overused and last fall, rainy weather forced the city to stop the use of some fields due to their poor condition. As the city population continues to grow, that demand and need is only going to continue to increase. That's why the Parks, Recreation and Forestry's Master Plan and Strategic Plan both identify the acquisition of 80 to 100 acres of active recreation parkland as a priority for the city.

The editorial suggests that we look inside the city for parkland stating "Let's keep an eye on property in our own back yards". As someone who has researched what properties are available in "our own back yard", I can tell you that there are very few. Active recreational parks need flat, dry land and the department prefers sites that are large enough to accommodate multiple fields, ideally at least 40 acres in size. According to the city's online mapping system, there are only 8 parcels of vacant land that are 40 acres or larger and are not already planned for development. Of those 8, only 6 are suited for active recreational use. That's 6 parcels in a city of over 31 square miles.

Even if any of those sites (or smaller sites) were available to the city to purchase, the next obstacle is cost. Having researched current listings for vacant land in the city, I can tell you that vacant land zoned for residential development in Novi starts at \$100,000 per acre and goes up from there even in the current real estate market. That puts the purchase price of a 40 acre site at \$4 million minimum. For comparison, suitable properties within 1/2 mile of the city's western border in Salem and Lyon Townships are currently listed at \$30,000 - \$35,000 per acre.

The editorial dismisses the issue of cost. But the premium for purchasing active parkland within the city is steep. For the \$4 million it would cost just to acquire 40 acres within the city, we could acquire double the acreage in Lyon or Salem Township and have enough money to develop the fields and facilities for the park. Finding enough money for any active parkland acquisition is going to be a challenge. To not even consider looking at such an opportunity because it lies on the "wrong" side of Napier Road seems both short-sighted and fiscally unwise.

The editorial makes a big fuss about managing a park outside of our city border. Community Sports Park already sits at the border of 3 different communities and I've never heard that non-resident usage or management of the park has been a problem. Cities as diverse as Ann Arbor, Dearborn and Grosse Point Woods all own parks outside their borders. If those communities can successfully manage their parks, why wouldn't Novi be able to do the same? I have every confidence that our Parks department can manage our parks and their usage whether they lie on the east or west side of Napier Road.

It's not enough for critics to say "Our parks should be in our city, not another city. Period." Where are the suggestions for suitable sites within the city? Where are the suggestions on how we're going to pay for it?

Much of the criticism of the idea appears to ignore the realities of this issue. By stubbornly refusing to look at alternatives, critics may be depriving our active sports community of the only real opportunities to acquire land to provide the fields those sports need.

I look forward to working with my fellow Council members, the City administration and our active sports community in finding solutions to our need for more active recreational parkland. Whether that land is located inside Novi or across our border, I know that the Council will balance the preference to acquire parkland within the city, which is my preference, with the real world limits of what land is available in Novi and the cost to acquire it. I would ask that the critics of such an idea do the same.

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City-wide pathway rehabilitation project approved

Asphalt paving awarded

Council voted 7-0 in favor of contracting T&M Asphalt Paving Inc. of Milford for the 2007 Bituminous Pathway Rehabilitation Program.

This projects includes the rehabilitation of approximately 7,900 lineal feet of existing 8-foot wide bituminous asphalt pathway within Novi at the following locations: Taft Road between Emerald Forest Drive and Dover Boulevard; Nine Mile Road between Chase Drive and Meadowbrook Road; Meadowbrook Road south of Nine Mile Road; Taft Road between White Pines Drive and Dunbarton Drive; Taft Road south of Nine Mile Road; Novi Road between 13 Mile Road and Wimbledon Way; and Taft Road south of 11 Mile Road.

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MY PARKS & RECREATION



Thursday, October 10
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Explore the world in one place, downtown Novi

International Festival Saturday

By Kelly Murad
STAFF WRITER

Novi residents will have the opportunity to explore 20 different countries throughout the world, while strolling along Main and Market streets in downtown Novi this weekend.

The Novi Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department is hosting the seventh annual International Festival from noon-6 p.m. Saturday.

"The main focus of our department is enriching lives and strengthening community," said Derek Smith, recreation supervisor for the Novi Parks Department. "Through different cultural organizations, not just in Novi but across the country, we

are becoming a more diverse society."

Representatives from countries such as Japan, China, India, Pakistan, Lebanon, Taiwan and Mexico will be sharing their cultures' traditions with the Novi community.

As part of the festival, a Parade of Nations will begin at 3 p.m.

"We are a very diverse community," Smith said. "We are hoping to have kids from all over participate (in the parade), wearing their native attire."

Festival go-ers will also have the opportunity to sample and purchase authentic ethnic cuisine from local restaurants such as, Kim's Gardens, Lazy Lizard Cantina, Gus O'Connors and Basic Asian Mart.

Entertainment will be provided free of charge, throughout the day. There will be two stages with performances including a professional Japanese flute player, a puppet show from Taiwan, Korean fan dance and drumming, a Lebanese dance group and an Armenian trio.

Kids will have an opportunity to participate in arts and crafts by making Mexican flowers and receiving Henna tattoos.

According to Smith, numerous local businesses have contributed

International Festival

Date: Saturday, Oct. 6
Location: Along Main and Market streets in downtown Novi.

Time: Noon-6 p.m. with the Parade of Nations beginning at 3 p.m.

• In case of inclement weather, the festival will be moved inside the Atrium of Novi.

to the festival as sponsors or vendors, with Providence Hospital as the main sponsor of the event.

"It's a good opportunity for our local businesses to get involved with our community," Smith said. "Our diverse businesses, locally, are part of what attracts (members of different cultures) to Novi."

Smith is expecting the festival to attract between 2,000-3,000 people, especially if weather permits. If there is inclement weather on Saturday, the festival will be moved inside the Atrium of Novi.

Novi News staff writer Kelly Murad can be reached at (248) 349-1700, ext 103 or kmurad@gannett.com.



City of Novi courtesy photo

The seventh annual International Festival begins this Saturday at noon.

Trips for Kids

Novi Parks Recreation Trips Kids is going Lakeshore Saturday. Trips Kids Detroit comb mountain bik canoeing/kayaking hiking, snowshoe and cross-country ing outings with esteem, environm awareness, teamv and crime avoid: for kids who w not otherwise l these opportunities.

The day-long e is staffed by vo teers and incl lunch and cookie cle, where volunt review the day's c lenges that were o come and relate v was learned thro out the day back to students' every lives.

For more infor tion, visit www.trforkids.org.

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MAPLE IN THE MIDDLE: Once-popular Norway tree is subject of debate: It's pretty, but is it invasive?

October 17, 2007

BY MARTY HAIR
FREE PRESS GARDEN WRITER

Giovanni Morreale looked up at the three shade trees in his front yard and at the purple- leaf sapling being planted this week near his driveway.

"They're gorgeous," the Grosse Pointe Park resident said of the Norway maple trees.

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Vonage

Like many fans of the tree, he loves it for its attractive rounded shape, bold leaves, fall color and ability to thrive in urban areas.

Sharon Mendoza of Berkley had a Norway maple in front of her house for 25 years. It started to lose limbs a few years ago and had to be cut down.

She hopes another tree will be planted next year, perhaps a different maple.

"I prefer a native tree," Mendoza says.

With fall tree planting season in progress, Morreale and Mendoza represent different sides of the debate raging about whether the Norway maple -- a popular landscape tree -- should be on lists of recommended shade trees for planting in Michigan.

Yes, according to growers and others who consider Norway maple varieties like the dark-leaf Crimson King attractive and resilient. They say it's easy to produce, transplant and grow.

Some environmentalists say Norway maple has been overused and that its propensity to spread by seed into natural areas makes it so invasive, it should no longer be planted.

Others say it's an option for urban, suburban and commercial sites. But, "I won't plant Norway maple next to a forested area," said Robert Schutzki, a Michigan State University horticulture professor. "I don't think it should be eliminated."

Not welcome here

In Michigan, the tree has invaded parkland and wooded areas in Ann Arbor and on Mackinac Island.

In Ann Arbor, the city doesn't plant them and encourages developers not to, either, according to David Borneman, natural areas preservation manager for Ann Arbor.

He said the species is invasive through the midwest and northeast. Coincidentally, interest in growing native plants is increasing in places like Ann Arbor. Norway maple was introduced from Europe in the 1700s.

Novi no longer plants Norway maples -- not only because it considers them invasive but also because the city has too many maple-street trees and Norways can develop problems, such as girdling roots,

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(SUSAN TUSA/DFP)

Giovanni Morreale of Grosse Pointe Park, left, talks with Grosse Pointe Park City Forester Brian Coulter. Morreale is a fan of Norway maples. Coulter says he only plants them when a homeowner requests them. "I try to stay away from them," he says.



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as they grow, says Steve Printz, Novi's parks and forestry operations manager.

Invasive or not?

Growers lament that, once an uberpopular Honda Civic among shade trees, Norway maple has turned into an Edsel.

Marc Van Agen has nearly 20,000 Norway maple trees in his fields at Van Agen Sod Farm in Bancroft. Demand for the trees from landscape contractors and city foresters has dried up, he said, in the last 18 to 24 months.

Locally, Meijer stores stopped selling Norway maples last spring, calling it an invasive species. The Michigan Native Plant Producers Association's Web site has the tree on its list of potential invasives.

Josh Tandeski said the label is unfair. Norway maple shouldn't be lumped in with aggressive plants like purple loosestrife that are much greater threats, he says.

And, in his opinion, even if it's not fashionable to say it, native plants aren't always superior to introduced species.

"What's native about a cityscape, really?" says Tandeski of Tandeski Associates in Richmond, which sells nursery stock to garden centers and contractors. "If you put in a Norway maple in a Wal-Mart parking lot and it does seed, where are the seeds going to go? What's it going to invade?"

Doug Pearsall, senior conservation scientist with the Nature Conservancy in Michigan, which worked with Meijer, says although Norway maple is not the worst threat facing land managers, there is no question that it is invasive.

Its seedlings sprout in natural areas and have invaded forested areas of Mackinac Island, he said. Eradication requires chopping the tree down and then slathering the stump with herbicide.

In Grosse Pointe Park, Morreale pointed to the two large Norways bordering his house, lawn and circular driveway.

"There is no chance of invading," he says. He estimates the trees were planted when the house was built in the 1960s.

Brian Coulter, the city forester in Grosse Pointe Park, is planting more than 100 trees of 20 diverse species this fall, including ginkgos and horse chestnuts. He is planting just a few Norway maples, and only then where homeowner requests one.

Coulter doesn't consider Norways invasive but he is concerned about their longevity in compacted clay soils.

"I'm trying to stay away from them," he says.

Meanwhile, at Van Agen's farm between Flint and Lansing, the Norway maple trees keep getting larger.

Unless demand changes, by next summer "we're going to be ripping some out and burning them," Van Agen said. "That, combined with our economy -- wow, it's just bad news."

Contact **MARTY HAIR** at 313-222-2005 or mhair@freepress.com.

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Halloween Storybook Stroll

Saturday, October 20 · Lakeshore Park

On Saturday, October 20, over 300 local children enjoyed Novi Parks, Recreation & Forestry's first Halloween Storybook Stroll. Participants trick-or-treated along a trail and collected candy and goodies from storybook characters such as Peter Pan, Cruella Devil and the Emperor. Additionally, games, crafts, hayrides, an inflatable jousting arena sponsored by Pump-It-Up of Wixom, and refreshments from Dunkin Donuts on Ten Mile Rd. had the kids smiling ear to ear. Over 1,200 people, including parents and siblings visited Lakeshore Park that day, some for the first time.



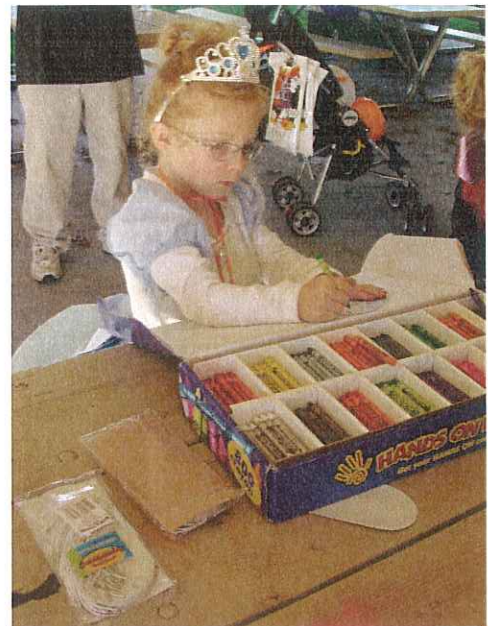
Community volunteers dressed in costumes from the Novi Theatres for the Trick or Treat Trail.



Pump It Up's inflatable jousting arena was extremely popular with Storybook Stroll participants.



Hayrides throughout Lakeshore Park were part of the event and a huge hit with crowd.



A Disney Princess decorates a mask at one of the craft stations.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

School Performances October 29, 30, & 31

This week Novi Parks Performing Arts performed *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* to 1000 students and teachers during Novi Theatres school performances. The students came with their classes and watched the play as part of their curriculum.



Kids are gathering with their group after getting on the bus to get organized before entering the Civic Center.



Students enter the building quietly in line. The groups were extremely well behaved and excited for the show.



Some even came in their Halloween costumes for the performance on 10/31.



The audience is excitedly waiting for the show to begin. The audience for this performance was close to 400 people.

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Tom, Huck hop onstage in Novi

Kids help bring a classic to life

October 21, 2007

BY NANCY CHIPMAN POWERS
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

"The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," based on Mark Twain's classic tale, will be brought to life onstage by the Novi Theatres beginning Friday at the Novi Civic Center Stage.

Novi Theatres' performing arts coordinator, Debbie Lannen of Walled Lake, and director Laura Sorrentino of Novi added their own twist to the production, which is suitable for all ages.

Although this is not the musical version, two songs from the musical, "Paintin' the Fence" and "Lessons," will be performed by the "Paintin' the Fence" cast of nine kids, ages 6-12.

"It gets younger actors into a show to feel it out and not commit to rehearsals,"

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(Crescent Rose Photography)

From left, Brianna Blossfeld of Novi as Becky, Mike Petrillo of Commerce Township as Tom Sawyer and Connor McDonald of Novi as Huck Finn in the Novi Theatres production of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer."



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Lannen said. "That's our spin on this one."

Lannen and Sorrento also have enlisted Alexis Roehling of Northville and Emily Patterson of Novi as stage managers working behind the scenes.

"A lot of kids want to do theater but do not want to be onstage," said Lannen. "This gives them an opportunity to do that."

Alexis is a freshman at Livonia Ladywood, and Emily is a freshman at Novi High. As stage managers, they have big responsibilities, such as being at all rehearsals, taking notes for the director and helping those who miss a rehearsal to catch up, said Lannen.

The cast is made up of students ages 6-18 from Commerce Township, Farmington Hills, Novi, Northville, Redford Township, Walled Lake and Wixom. The lead roles have been double cast, meaning actors will alternate dates they'll be onstage. The "Paintin' the Fence" chorus will be onstage for all performances.

The "A" cast features Mike Petrillo of Commerce Township as Tom, David Grougan of Novi as Huck and Ashley Shamoon of Northville as Becky. They'll perform 7:30 p.m. Friday, 2 p.m. Saturday, 10:30 a.m. Oct. 30 and 7:30 p.m. Nov. 3.

The "B" cast features Jaret Grisamer of Novi as Tom, Connor McDonald of Novi as Huck and Brianna Blossfeld of Novi as Becky. They'll perform 7:30 p.m. Saturday, 2 p.m. next Sunday, 10 a.m. Oct. 31 and 7:30 p.m. Nov. 2.

The shows at 10 a.m. Oct. 30 and 31 are sold out. A third show for local students has been added at 10 a.m. Oct. 29; it will have a mixed cast.

Novi Theatres offers the daytime performances of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" as field trip opportunities because the book is a classic studied in school. The production brings the classroom curriculum to life and lets the young actors experience performing in front of their peers. Lannen is hoping the students enjoy the performance so much that they'll bring their parents to an evening

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performance.

"Teachers we have talked to are thrilled to do this," said Lannen, who is considering offering a classic performance for schools every fall.

Tickets for school shows at 10 a.m. are \$5 and must be purchased as a group. Tickets for all other shows are \$12. All shows are at the Novi Civic Center Stage, 45175 W. Ten Mile. For tickets and more information, call 248-347-0400 or go to www.novitheatres.com. Contact **NANCY CHIPMAN POWERS** at 313-222-2354 or nchipman@freepress.com.

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Novi Theatres brings an American classic to the stage

The
Adventures of
Tom Sawyer
Oct. 26-Nov. 3

by Kelly Murad
STAFF WRITER

The Novi Theatres is combining a 19th century classic American tale with some rhythm and music.

"It's not a full musical, but there is music in it," said performing arts coordinator Debbie Lannen of the fall production "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." "Everyone likes to hear a song now and then," she said. "It's a more creative way to put the show on."

The Novi Theatres held auditions in September and selected two casts for the nine performances Oct. 26-Nov. 3.

According to Lannen, even kids who hadn't read the book were familiar with the story.

"They all know Injun Joe and they all knew the paintin' the

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

The Novi Theatres Presents Mark Twain's
"The Adventures of Tom Sawyer"

Friday, Oct. 26 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 27 2 & 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 28 2 p.m.

*Monday, Oct. 29 10 a.m.

Tuesday, Oct. 30 10 a.m.

*Wednesday, Oct. 31 10 a.m.

Friday, Nov. 2 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 3 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are on sale at the Novi Civic Center Parks Office: \$12 for regular scheduled shows and \$5 for school performance shows.
* School performance tickets must be purchased as a group.

For more information call (248) 347-0400.

icipated in the "paintin' the fence" class, which was designed to give beginning actors a chance to experience performing.

Students of the class will perform two musical numbers in each of the productions.

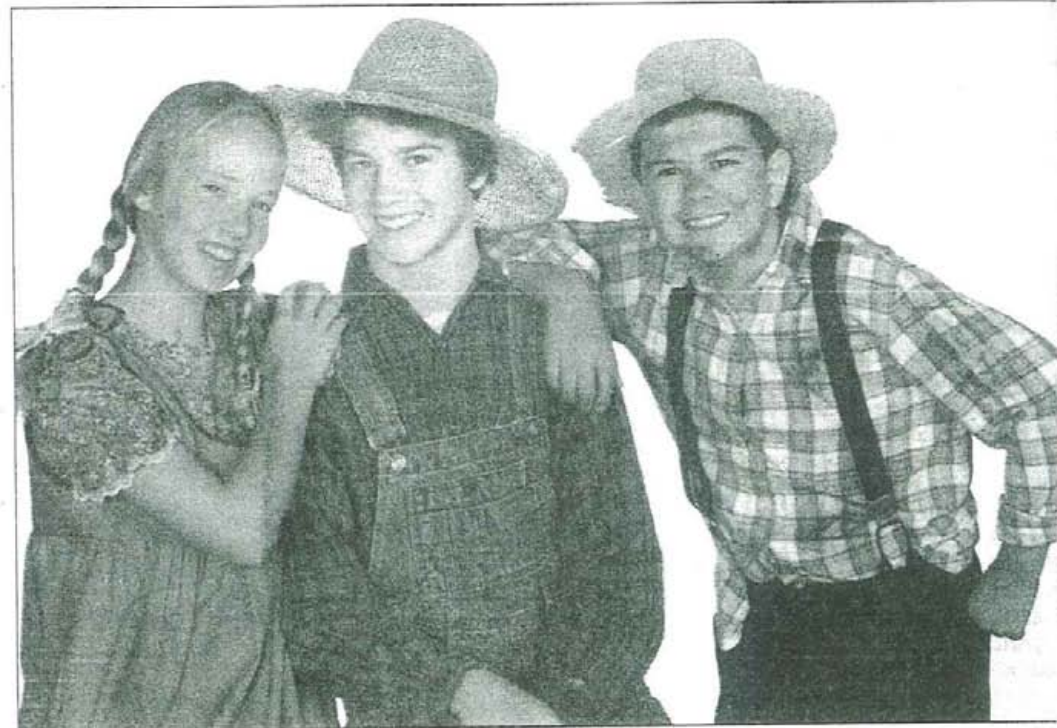
Even with a new spin on the production of Mark Twain's novel, the content remains the same.

"Our fall-time slot is going to be our classic-type theatre," Lannen said. "We have not modernized it at all. Mark Twain wouldn't be Mark Twain in the

schools who study "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" as part of their curriculum, the Novi Theatres is offering three daytime school performances for teachers to purchase group tickets for their classes at a lower price.

"Our (first) two shows completely sold out," said Lannen, noting a third daytime performance was added for Oct. 29.

Novi News staff writer Kelly Murad can be reached at (248) 349-1700, ext 103 or kmurad@gannett.com.



City of Novi courtesy photo

Novi Theatres upcoming production of Tom Sawyer stars Brianna Blossfeld of Novi (left), Mike Petrillo of Commerce and Connor McDonald of Novi. Nine performances will take place from Oct. 26 through Nov. 3 at the Novi Civic Center.

TOM, HUCK HOP ONSTAGE

Mark Twain classic brought to life with cast of local kids

NOVI

BY NANCY CHIPMAN POWERS
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

"The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," based on Mark Twain's classic tale, will be brought to life onstage by the Novi Theatres beginning Friday at the Novi Civic Center Stage.

Novi Theatres' performing arts coordinator, Debbie Lannen of Walled Lake, and director Laura Sorrentino of Novi added their own twist to the production, which is suitable for all ages.

Although this is not the musical version, two songs from the musical, "Paintin' the Fence" and "Lessons," will be performed by the "Paintin' the Fence" cast of nine kids, ages 6-12.

"It gets younger actors into a show to feel it out and not commit to rehearsals," Lannen said. "That's our spin on this one."

Lannen and Sorrento also have enlisted Alexis Roehling of Northville and Emily Patterson of Novi as stage managers working behind the scenes.

"A lot of kids want to do theater but do not want to be onstage," said Lannen. "This

gives them an opportunity to do that."

Alexis is a freshman at Livonia Ladywood, and Emily is a freshman at Novi High. As stage managers, they have big responsibilities, such as being at all rehearsals, taking notes for the director and helping those who miss a rehearsal to catch up, said Lannen.

The cast is made up of students ages 6-18 from Commerce Township, Farmington Hills, Novi, Northville, Redford Township, Walled Lake and Wixom. The lead roles have been double cast, meaning actors will alternate dates they'll be onstage. The "Paintin' the Fence" chorus will be onstage for all performances.

The "A" cast features Mike Petrillo of Commerce Township as Tom, David Grougan of Novi as Huck and Ashley Shannon of Northville as Becky. They'll perform 7:30 p.m. Friday, 2 p.m. Saturday, 10:30 a.m. Oct. 30 and 7:30 p.m. Nov. 3.

The "B" cast features Jaret Grisamer of Novi as Tom, Connor McDonald of Novi as Huck and Brianna Blossfeld of Novi as Becky. They'll perform 7:30 p.m. Saturday, 2 p.m. next Sunday, 10 a.m. Oct. 31 and 7:30 p.m. Nov. 2.

The shows at 10 a.m. Oct. 30 and 31 are sold out. A third show for local students has been added at 10 a.m. Oct. 29; it will have a mixed cast.

Novi Theatres offers the daytime performances of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" as field trip opportunities because the book is a classic studied in school. The production brings the classroom curriculum to life and lets the young actors experience performing in front of their peers. Lannen is hoping the students enjoy the performance so much that they'll bring their parents to an evening performance.

"Teachers we have talked to are thrilled to do this," said Lannen, who is considering offering a classic performance for schools every fall.

Tickets for school shows at 10 a.m. are \$5 and must be purchased as a group. Tickets for all other shows are \$12. All shows are at the Novi Civic Center Stage, 45175 W. Ten Mile. For tickets and more information, call 248-347-0400 or go to www.novitheatres.com.

Contact NANCY CHIPMAN POWERS at 313-222-2354 or nchipman@freepress.com.



From left, Brianna Blossfeld of Novi as Becky, Mike Petrillo of Commerce Township as Tom Sawyer, and Connor McDonald of Novi as Huck Finn in the Novi Theatres production of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." Photo by Crescent Park.

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25	26	27	28

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

Categories: Theater, Opera & Musicals, Family



The Novi Theatres presents Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer."

Audiences will feel like they are part of the action as Tom, Huck, Becky and friends visit the graveyard at midnight and fight injun Joe in the cave. No "Tom Sawyer"

production would be complete without paintin' the fence and learnin' at school, and the Novi Theatres does it musically in their production.

Because the book is a classic studied in schools, the Novi Theatres has added three daytime performances to create field trip opportunities for local schools. Tickets for The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, including the student shows, are on sale at the Novi Civic Center Parks Office, 45175 W. 10 Mile.

The play runs Oct. 26 through Nov. 3. For information, call (248) 347-0400 or [click here](#).

Venue: [Novi Theatres](#)
Organization: [Novi Theatres](#)

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- November 2
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