

Attendance was down considerably for the season at Theatre in the Park, with much of the blame going to the unrelenting heat.

| PAGE 4

# Summer heat takes toll on Theatre in the Park

By JOE HENDERSON  
Special to The Star

"Legally Blonde," a late substitution for "Sweet Charity" in the original 2012 Theatre in the Park schedule, ended up being the top draw in a season that saw attendance drop by more than 20 percent.

"When 'Legally Blonde' was made available to us we immediately made the switch," said Tim Bair, producing artistic director. "It's a lively, up-to-date show with great music and is more timely than 'Sweet Charity,' which was produced at The Theatre more than 30 years ago."

The Disney double feature of "The Jungle Book" and "Sleeping Beauty" drew an audience of 6,505, followed by "Sweeney Todd" with 4,181, "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" with 3,460 and "Urinetown," 3,358.

Despite a five-show format, only 25,774 people attended this season compared with 33,089 during last year's four-show season, a 22 percent attendance drop.

None of the 2012 shows had been produced before at The Theatre in the Park.

Bair cited temperatures over 100 degrees during the last month of the season as a factor in lower attendance.

"It was unbearably hot those last few weeks and I'm sure that had an effect on crowds. People don't like to sit outside in 100-degree weather," he said.

Bair said he was disappointed that the Disney double feature

didn't draw a larger audience, which he thought would attract more people despite the heat.

"Charlie Brown did a little better," Bair said. "It had appeal for both kids and parents. I heard a lot of laughter from parents. I think it probably had as much or more appeal for parents because many of them grew up with the 'Peanuts' comic strip."

Bair said he hoped to continue with the five-show format again next season.

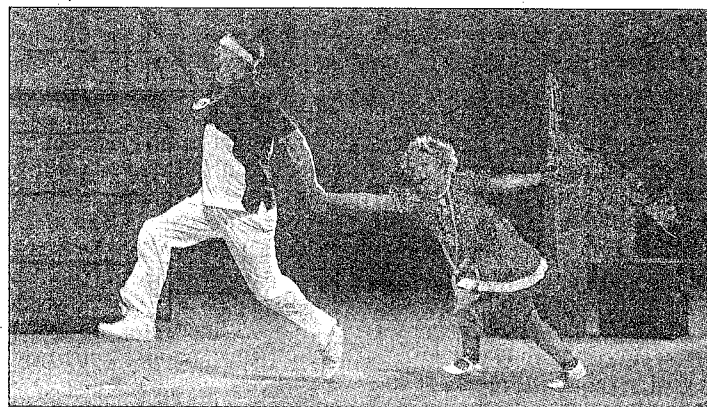
"I like it. It gives us two weeks for a fifth show toward the end of the summer before school starts. I haven't heard any opposition to it and I have heard from people who liked it," he said.

Bair determines what shows are available and makes recommendations to the Theatre Advisory Council and Jill Geller, superintendent of recreation for the Johnson County Parks and Recreation District. The Theatre in the Park is sponsored by the Parks and Recreation District and the District's Board of Commissioners makes the final decision on the season.

Bair expects to begin selecting shows for the 2013 season within two or three weeks.

Although attendance for the 2012 season was down this year, the pavilion, located next to The Theatre in the Park was booked for 44 dates, nearly double last year's bookings of 23 dates.

The pavilion has been especially popular for weddings and corporate parties, Bair said.



| SUBMITTED PHOTO

"You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" appealed to audience members of all ages, said Tim Bair, Theatre in the Park producing artistic director,