

Dysfunctional family theme sure to garner laughs: Players

By Julie Slack
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

When the Milton Players take to the stage at the Milton Centre for the Arts next weekend, be sure to bring along the family — even the kids.

And bring along your own reminiscent family gathering horror stories so you can compare notes with those gathered in this play, explains play director Susan Cranford.

She promises it will be a fun yet poignant play young and old will enjoy.

A Nice Family Gathering, a Phil Olson play, tells the story about a man who loves his wife so much, he almost told her.

Performed by the Milton Players Theatre Group, it's on stage from May 3 to 5 and from May 9 to 11.

It's Thanksgiving Day (American) and the first family gathering at the Lundeen household since the Patriarch died.

At the gathering, the family gets together 10 months after he passed away.

As much as *A Nice Family Gathering* is a comedy, it's also very poignant, especially toward the end, Cranford said.

Two competing brothers — only one of them married — and a sister are visited by their father, who's now a ghost, trying to tell his wife of 41



Members of Milton Players Theatre Group gather for a rehearsal for their upcoming production of *A Nice Family Gathering*, which will open Friday, May 3 at the Milton Centre for the Arts. Here, preparing for the show are (seated, from left) Brian Cranford (Carl), Patricia Ball (Mom), Kim Evans (Stacy), (standing, from left) Geoff Ford (Dad), John Saunders (Jerry), Tara Bostock (Jill) and Huw Evans (Michael).
Graham Paine / Canadian Champion (Follow on Twitter @halton_photog)

years that he loved her. It's a second chance for him to be able to tell her his feelings. However, he can only be seen by the single brother, played by Brian Cranford of St. Catharines.

What ensues is what typically ensues at a family function where you have competing siblings, Cranford said.

"There's one scene where the brothers are acting like little kids again... the whole 'no

you can't, yes I can' thing," she said.

The ghost of the father, played by Geoff Ford of Mississauga, is constantly walking around the set.

"That was particularly challenging for the other actors," Cranford said. "With him moving in and out amongst them, they had to learn not to look at him."

But, she said, the actors are all professionals with many credits to their names and

they learned quickly.

The other brother, Michael, is played by Mississauga's Huw Evans, while his wife (Jill) is played by Tara Bostock of Puslinch. Patricia Ball of Georgetown plays the mom, Helen, while Stacy, the daughter, is played by Kim Evans, also of Mississauga.

John Saunders from Milton plays Jerry, a friend of the family.

The seven actors started practicing in

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