

'Greased Lightnin' strikes at EDHS

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

An Essex District High School drama ensemble is spending every night after classes practising their dance steps, perfecting their harmonies and fine-tuning their acting chops to prepare for three performances of the musical Grease later this month.

Since October, drama teacher Michelle O'Neil and music teacher Dee Shaw have been molding a cast of 16 students and bringing out their talents for a retelling of the Broadway love story.

With plenty of '50s rock 'n' roll in the score, Shaw has been busy with a seven-piece band rehearsing such classics as Greased Lightnin', Summer Nights and Look at Me I'm Sandra Dee.

"It's going pretty well," Shaw said. "Everybody knows the tunes so it's a little easier to learn. And

they're having fun with it."

With dress rehearsals beginning this week, O'Neil, the director, said the cast is "a little stressed out at this point."

"It's about getting the cast to focus and get along with one another enough to put on a show," she joked. "That's the main challenge."

For a high school that doesn't put on a staged play or musical every year, O'Neil said Grease was chosen to be this year's performance because of its universal appeal.

"Grease is basically attractive to an audience," she said. "The songs are familiar to people. The storyline is familiar to people. It really brings out a crowd. It's the first time we've done something together this big so we wanted to ensure that we had an audience. It's also an easy thing to get kids to try out for



A.J. Hetzel and Maeve Keating are preparing to hit the EDHS stage later this month as the lead characters in a retelling of the classic musical Grease. The show's cast and crew are keeping busy this week during dress rehearsals.

because they enjoy the music and we had a lot of people audition because of that. It's different than

Shakespeare, which would be difficult to have kids come and try out for, but they hear "Grease" and they

want to be involved in it."

In the story, lead characters Danny and Sandy, played by Grade 11 student A.J. Hetzel and Grade 10 student Maeve Keating, spend their summer vacation falling in love. But once school starts up again, tough-guy Danny plays it cool in front of his clique of macho friends and brushes off good-girl Sandy.

Playing the bad-boy Danny is a bit of a stretch for nice-guy A.J., who said he had a tough time bringing out his mean side for the character during early rehearsals.

"I was having the hardest time," A.J. said. "Then people said, 'be more like Danny.' You can't be the regular A.J." After taking inspiration from John Travolta's performance in the movie version of Grease, A.J. was ready to tackle the role.

For A.J., a newcomer to stage work, playing a lead character is exciting.

"It's kind of different," he said. "I just haven't done anything like this before."

At 16, Maeve has already established a history in dramatic arts. She's performed in amateur theatre for the Windsor Light Opera and last year brought a two-person show to the regional competition of Ontario's Sears Fest. In Grease, she originally tried out for a supporting role, but later landed the leading female part.

She also had her own challenges adjusting to the role of Sandy.

"Sandy is shy and in my acting I'm more outgoing," she said.

But with lots of practice and a little guidance from Olivia Newton-John's performance in the movie version, Maeve has settled into the role and is ready to hit the stage.

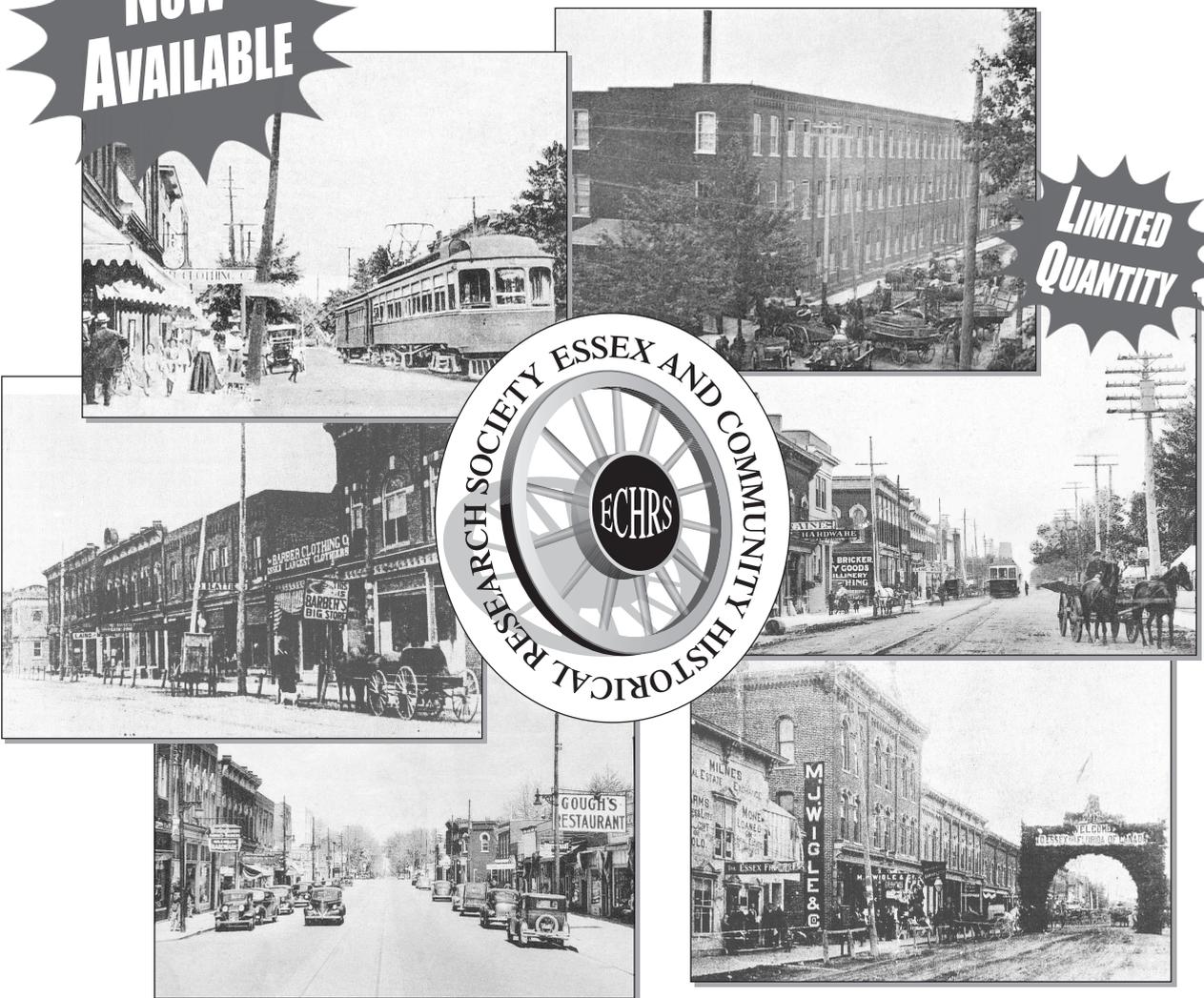
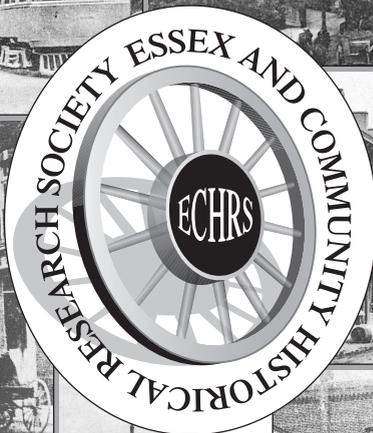
Grease will be performed at Essex District High School on April 27 and 28 at 7 p.m.

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This public awareness event marks the beginning of **RESPECT FOR LIFE WEEK**

Sponsored by **LEAMINGTON AREA RIGHT TO LIFE**

This is a peaceful Walk to LEAMINGTON DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL to express not only concern for unborn children being killed by abortion but also concern for their mothers who may not have received the love, care and support needed to carry their children to term.

Meet at 3:00 p.m. at the SOUTH POINT COMMUNITY CHURCH, 55A Talbot St. W. Address by Pastor Brad Wilson. Walk begins at 3:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Walk will take place rain or shine.

INQUIRIES: 519-325-0929