

PORT POLSON PLAYERS

Since its founding in 1976, Port Polson Players has become one of Montana's longest-lived cultural entities. Founded by businessman John Dowdall and Larry Barsness (Virginia City Players founder/producer 1948-1972), 2015 marks the theatre's milestone 40th season.

With individual artistic resumes spanning over 50 years each, Neal and Karen Lewing have nurtured the Players into a year-round three-tiered program: Children's Theatre, Community Theatre and professional Summer Stock. Averaging 10 productions annually, the company has produced over 350 shows, featuring more than 7500 participants. Roughly 70% of summer patrons are tourists.

Cultural and economic benefits have been enjoyed at all levels, especially important in an underserved rural tourist community on an Indian reservation. Cross-cultural ties are embraced and strengthened through regional outreach of theatrical programs stressing Montana history, culture and lifestyle.

Players producers also founded and ran a sister theatre in Deer Lodge MT for 13 years, as well as instigating similar programs in seven other small communities.

Exhibiting "*Multi-generational appeal*" (Montana Arts Council), Port Polson Players has garnered several awards, including citation from NAESP for their work with children. In 2007, Polson's Chamber of Commerce named Players producers Ambassador of the Year. The theatre has been nominated for the 2015 Montana Governor's Award, and featured in Sunset, Montana, and National Geographic magazines.

"This recognition is a fitting tribute to a model tourism entity whose producers have sacrificed through their art for the betterment of Montana for over four decades."

– Dennis Anderson, Pres.

Mission Valley Friends of the Arts

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