

Winter 2008

The TRAILER

Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska
North and South Dakota

The Newsletter of North Central NATO

Makes and Saves Your \$\$'s

**Scholarship Program
Announced - Application
Materials Enclosed**

**Storeroom
Safety**

**Books on
Minneapolis
Theatres**

**Help for
Employers
Hiring Teens**

**Why We Need
Your Help...**

Plus...much more inside!





Preview of Coming Attractions for 2009...

January 15-25 Sundance Film Festival
Park City, UT

March 30-April 2 ShowWest
Bally Hotel, Las Vegas, NV
**Note that this year's Showwest begins on Monday for all delegates.*

April 14-15 . .North Central NATO Spring
Marketing Conference
Sheraton West Hotel, Minnetonka, MN

April 28-May 1 Show Canada
Montreal, Quebec

May 12-14 Geneva Convention
Lake Geneva Resort, WI

GOOD SERVICE ISN'T ALWAYS EASY...

It's easy to talk about giving good service, but it isn't always as easy to deliver it. Sometimes it requires real patience and dedication. This fact was demonstrated by the staff of the Luxury 5 Cinemas in Mitchell, SD, as explained in this letter about manager Barb Christensen and her staff.

I had the pleasure of viewing the movie "Enchanted" this past Saturday, the 1st of December. Towards the end of the movie, one of the children with me got sick in the movie theatre. I immediately removed her and told the young lady at the counter that someone had gotten sick in the theatre. Each and every staff member was so helpful to us. My many apologies were met with smiles and words of forgiveness over and over. One of your employees helped find temporary clothes in the lost and found and make sure that we left with a change of clothes that were warm enough for the frigid weather. Never did I feel like our situation was a burden to any of your employees. I know that situation can't be fun, but they made us feel very comfortable. I appreciate all they did for us. You should be proud of the way your staff handled our incident.

This is truly an example of gracious service above and beyond what any of us like to handle. The good feelings created for the customers and letters like this make even the unpleasant parts of our jobs worthwhile and rewarding.

BOOKS ON MINNEAPOLIS THEATRES

Anyone who has been involved in the theatre business in Minneapolis as an employee, or even customer, will love two recent books written about the history of theatres in the Twin Cities.

In 2007, The Minnesota Historical Society Press published Dave Kenny's book *"Twin Cities Picture Show: A Century of Movie-*

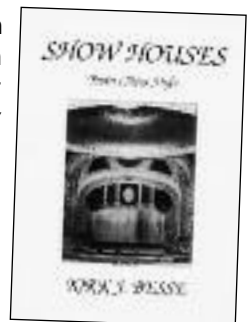
going." The book is available from Barnes and Noble online if it's not in your local bookstore.

It includes the fascinating behind the scenes stories of the theatres and their owners along with many

great photographs. The book will bring back memories and answer questions for anyone who has been around these great theatres. The book starts in the vaudeville days and comes right up to today with interviews with current exhibitors including Steve and Benji Mann, the Height's Tom Letness, and others.

The second book was published in 1997 and if no longer available in bookstores may be found on ebay or used bookshops. Kirk J. Besse's *"Show Houses Twin Cities Style"* presents a theatre-by-theatre description and history of all of the metro areas theatres to date. It also includes many photos and interesting background information.

Both books are fun reading and a recommended addition to your bookshelf if your are a history buff, involved in the business, or just have great memories of watching movies in any of these memorable old theatres.



2009 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ANNOUNCED...

North Central NATO Scholarship chairs Mike Schwartz and Nita Onen announced the 2009 scholarship program for employees of member theatres.

The application, appraisal form, and bulletin board poster/payroll envelope stuffers are included with this issue of The Trailer. Managers should make as many copies of each as they need for their staff.

THE DEADLINE FOR RECEIVING THE APPLICATIONS IS MARCH 1, 2009. Please note that this is the date the applications need to be received; not postmarked!

This year, North Central NATO will again award one \$1,000 scholarship and four \$500 dollar scholarships. We will also award one \$1,000 Pepsi Cola scholarship.

The scholarships are open for high school seniors and anyone attending a college, university, or vocational school in the 2009-2010 school year. Current college students may apply for their next school year. Applicants must be a current employee of a North Central NATO member theatre. Complete rules, requirements, and eligibility are printed on the application form.

Theatre owners and managers are encouraged to make as many copies as needed and distribute them to their employees wishing to apply. Posters are also enclosed that the managers may copy to inform their employees about the scholarships. They can be used as bulletin board posters, break room posters, payroll envelope stuffers, or however it is most effective to reach each theatre's employees.

The form has changed slightly from last year. Applicants are asked to include the names and addresses of their high school guidance counselors and local newspapers. They should also have a photo for publication in The Trailer ready to mail or email if they are notified that they have been awarded a scholarship. They should NOT send a photo with their application. The picture may be a senior picture or a snapshot taken at their theatre.

Mike Schwartz said, "This scholarship is a perk we can offer to our employees for working at our theatres. It can be used as a benefit that will attract quality employees and demonstrates our sincere interest in their futures."



North Central NATO is a unit of the National Association of Theatre Owners; serving Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa and Nebraska.

AVAILABLE SCHOLARSHIPS:

NC/NATO	4	\$500.00 awards
PEPSI	1	\$1000.00 award

APPLICANT CRITERIA:

1. Employed a minimum of 6 months at a theatre that is a current NATO member and in good standing with North Central NATO.
2. Senior in high school and will graduate before June 15th of the current year.
3. Has applied and been accepted at a 2-year or more, college or technical school, or is currently a college student carrying at least a 12 credit load per semester.
4. Submit a completed application, essay and appraisal sheets from your theatre manager or owner and one or two others from your high school guidance counselor and/or teachers.
5. Attach a high school or college transcript to the application.

APPLICATION DETAILS:

- All applications must be received (not postmarked by) **March 1st** of the year funds are to be applied.
- Funds will be awarded the 2nd semester of the year applied in, based upon successful completion of the 1st semester of current school year.
- Keep a copy of the entire application and attached materials.
- You will receive a dated acknowledgement of receipt of your application.
- The Scholarship Award Ceremony will be held at the NC/NATO Spring Marketing Conference.
- Decisions by the Scholarship Selection Committee are final.

SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION TO:

North Central NATO Scholarship
600 Second St.
Jackson, MN 56143

KEEPING STOREROOMS SAFE FROM INSECTS, RODENTS, GERMS, THIEVES AND OTHER PESTS

By Jeff Logan

Concession storerooms are an unglamorous and often overlooked part of the theatre. But their importance cannot be overstressed to the profitable and healthy operation of the theatre. In this second article in a series on snack bar safety, we'll look at how to apply proper warehouse techniques to theatre storerooms. These techniques should increase efficiency and avoid potential plagues.

LOCATION

Ideally the concession storeroom should be located behind or very close to the concessions stand. The more convenient its location for the staff, the better it is able to fulfill its role as a "concession support room." The worst location I have ever seen for a concession storeroom was "backstage" behind the screen. The staff distracted the audience every time they went through the auditorium for supplies and they couldn't turn on the storeroom lights as they would shine through the screen!

If at all possible, concession storerooms should be located on the main floor. Storing concessions in basements and upstairs should be avoided. Although many older theatres were designed with storerooms in the basement or next to (or in) the projection rooms, they create several problems. Carrying supplies on stairways puts your workers off balance and limits their ability to see, increasing the likelihood of dangerous falls. Such injuries can be painful and will increase in costly Workman's Comp insurance claims. Store-rooms off

the main floor
also increase
payroll
costs for
the
extra
time

required hauling supplies to the other level.

Although the cool temperatures found in basements might be thought of as good for keeping candy fresh, the high humidity speeds spoilage more than the cooler temperatures prevent it. More importantly, basements are attractive habitats for insects and rodents. Both insects and rodents will enter through floor drains that are allowed to dry out. In downtown theatres, it is almost impossible to keep pests from burrowing through the walls into the basement from neighboring buildings. If anything has to be stored in basements, limit it to non-food items and dry supplies such as paper products and light bulbs.

If necessary, examine your theatre to see if you can re-arrange the usage of rooms to get the concession supplies stored conveniently close to the concession stand on the main floor. Such an arrangement will actually speed your service and increase sales besides cutting payroll and employee accidents.

SECURE AREA

For proper inventory control and to avoid constant theft, the ideal situation is to have a locked room where all food, cups, popcorn sacks, candy bars and "inventoried" items are stored under lock and key 24 hours a day. Refrigerators and freezers can also be located in these rooms. Only the managers and concessions managers should have keys to this room and those keys are only issued to authorized concession workers during operating hours. Theft often occurs during off hours. The temptation to "just take a candy bar or two" seems just too much for many janitors, meter readers, plumbers, electricians, and other repair people. The resulting losses can easily mount into the hundreds if not thousands.

In situations where the theatre has a large storeroom where concession supplies must share

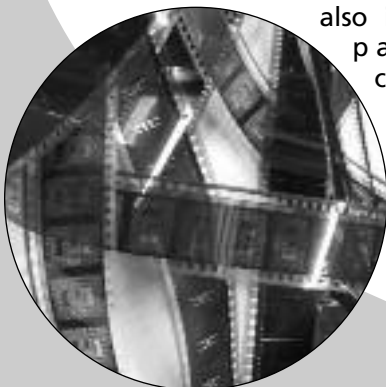
the space with janitor and other supplies, a common solution is to divide the room into two rooms. Ventilation is important in concession storage. If there are not adequate fresh air and return air ducts in each half of the room to be divided, it can be split with a "cage" wall. In this case, a stud wall with a lock and door is erected inside part of the room. Instead of covering the wall with sheet rock, it is covered with wire screen or "chicken wire." This allows for the original planned free movement of heating and cooling air throughout the space.

PLACEMENT OF SHELVES

The most common storeroom layout is to put shelves against every wall and then a row or two of shelves down the middle of the room if space permits. Although it is often unavoidable, this is not proper warehouse or storeroom layout! Ideally, there should always be an aisle against the walls and all shelves should be free standing in the middle of the room. When shelves are placed against the wall, they create spaces that are difficult if not impossible to get to and clean on a regular basis. This creates breeding grounds for insects and rodents. Rodents can also eat holes through the walls that won't be noticed if there are shelves and supplies stacked against the walls. Unfortunately, most theatre storerooms are not designed large enough to allow for this more sanitary and cleaning friendly arrangement. Managers are left to do the best they can.

Theatres that come under state or city health inspections are aware of regulations covering storage of food containers and other supplies. Even theatres that do not come under health regulations should follow the same guidelines to keep their products safe.

Nothing—repeat nothing—should ever be stored on the floor! The bottom shelf should be no less than 6" off the floor. Metal wire shelving is best. Some inspectors approve



wooden shelving and solid metal shelving, others do not. Cleaning supplies and soaps should preferably be stored in a separate room from food and concession supplies. If this is not possible, they must be at least stored UNDER food and containers. Soaps, liquids and other cleaning supplies should never be stored on shelves above food or food containers in case the cleaning supplies would leak and contaminate the food. Lids should not be torn off boxes as they prevent insects and dirt from getting inside the cases. All containers should be clearly labeled.

PEST CONTROL

If the theatre has any insect or rodent problem at all, it is highly recommended to contract with a reputable pest control service. The nominal cost of such a service more than pays for itself in unspoiled product and peace of mind. A good program usually involves a pest technician making a monthly visit to spray for insects and check and set rodent traps. It is usually false economy, ineffective and dangerous for the manager to try to control insects themselves. The wrong spray, or sloppily applied spray, can easily contaminate candy bars, popcorn and drink containers, and other supplies.

The manager, concession manager, and/or janitor should always do a walk through of the entire building

with every new pest control worker to point out areas where insects and pests have been spotted in the past. It takes the combined knowledge of the theatre staff and the pest technician to rid the theatre of unwanted guests.

Some pest control contractors are not thorough enough to be effective. The manager may have to "hire and fire" several contractors before finding one that can do an effective job at a reasonable price.

FIRE PREVENTION

There should be a fire extinguisher near the entrance to every storeroom and non-public area. It should be of the type most effective for the type of fire that might occur in that room. ABC extinguishers are the most effective but are caustic to food supplies and electronics. Work with your local Fire Marshall to get their recommendation and approval on what type of extinguisher to place in each room. Pressure water extinguishers are best on paper products and may be approved if there are no chemicals or other flammables stored nearby that require a more powerful extinguisher. They can often be used in auditoriums and storerooms containing mainly paper products. CO2 extinguishers are safe around food products and best for popcorn machine fires. CO2 is also safe for projection, sound, telephone and

other electronic equipment. CO2 extinguishers can often be placed in projection and electrical rooms and behind concession stands.

One of the best means of fire prevention is good housekeeping. Get rid of the old posters, standees and combustibles that seem to clutter many theatre storerooms. Of particular note is spontaneous combustion that seems to most often occur around cloth rags that have been used with paint, thinners, lacquers, varnishes, cleaning fluids, and other flammable liquids. Rags are cheap—don't save them. Throw these rags away outside in the dumpster before leaving for the day. Unless expensive brushes are needed for the job, it is safer to throw away cheap disposable brushes rather than trying to clean them by leaving them soaking overnight in open containers of flammable paint thinner.

Strictly enforce the "no smoking" laws in all parts of your building. Many fires have started when an employee or delivery person tossed a cigarette into a wastebasket or bucket that was full of paper or other combustibles. How many managers have seen customers toss cigarettes into ticket taker receptacles thinking they were an ashtray?

Think about the layout and usage of the various rooms in your theatre. A little re-arranging may make your operation easier, safer, and more profitable.

HELP FOR THEATRES EMPLOYING TEENS

For the past several years, national NATO has worked closely with "YouthRules!" to provide member theatres with compliance assistance materials to use in hiring teenage employees.

We wanted to let you know that there are several posters and other materials that can be found on the "YouthRules!" website at www.youthrules.dol.gov. The information will answer any questions you may have and includes posters explaining the hours and jobs that may be performed by teens.

Remember that some state laws may be more restrictive than these federal laws. In the case of labor law, unlike other laws, the stricter law, be it state or federal, trumps the less strict law.

For information on overtime rules, job restrictions and other laws administered by the wage and hours division, log onto www.wagehour.dol.gov.

National NATO has also printed generic job descriptions for most theatre positions including Boxoffice Attendant, Usher, Projectionist and Concession Salesperson. These descriptions are designed to meet federal requirements. These may be used in your own employee handbooks and training materials. As always, you should check with local legal counsel to be sure your handbooks and training materials meet your state requirements. National NATO members may obtain them from NATO headquarters in Washington, DC.





WHY WE NEED YOUR HELP...

by Belinda Judson, NATO State Government Liason

A new year is right around the corner. That also means that many states will soon be convening their 2009 legislative sessions.

We are already reading that given the current economic climate many states are having budgetary problems. They will all be looking for ways to obtain more monies, which usually results in a rash of tax proposals. These could be in the form of sale and use taxes, food and beverage taxes, admissions taxes or even film rental taxes.

However states are not the only entities with tight budgets. Cities and municipalities are also struggling and looking for ways to line the coffers. And local tax issues come into play. Most often we see these crop up as an add on increase in sales and use taxes but we have also had local admissions taxes imposed in certain cities.

Another issue that is currently sweeping the country is menu labeling. These menu labeling regulations require that caloric counts (and sometimes other nutritional information) be posted on menu boards in the same font as the other information on menu boards. And in many cases stiff fines are imposed for those not in compliance.

While two states, Georgia and Ohio mandate that menu labeling be addressed at the state level; the majority of the action on this particular issue is taking place in the cities and municipalities throughout the country.

So what does this have to do with you? State legislative issues are currently being monitored throughout the North Central states region. And while it is difficult to keep track of state initiatives it is IMPOSSIBLE to monitor them in each and every city throughout the country.

Because issues on this level are dealt with through local city councils or even local Boards of Health, as is the case in one recently proposed county-wide regulation. Unfortunately these proposals do not show up on any state tracking systems. Rather you will see

information appear in places such as the local newspapers or in local newscasts.

You are our eyes and ears in your locales. We need you to report any rumblings that you hear regarding local regulations. We can try to help with local issues but only when you keep us informed of them.

Let me give you an example of how it works. The appropriate NATO regional unit and exhibitors in that region are currently addressing the countywide menu labeling regulation that I mentioned earlier because a manager reported the issue to their corporate office. In other cities where NATO regionals and exhibitors have weighed in, there have been some successes in getting movie theatres exempted from this regulation. But without that manager's "heads up" the time for comments and hearings on the proposed regulation could have come and gone. Exhibitors in that county would have had no input on the issue.

That is in fact what happened with a city add on sales tax increase. The first notification that exhibitors had of this increase was when an article came out in the local newspapers and a reporter called the corporate offices for comments.

Unfortunately these tax increases and regulations are much harder to remove once they are enacted.

One of the main purposes of your regional unit is advocacy for state legislative issues. Please take a moment to contact your corporate office or the North Central States NATO office when you hear any rumblings regarding legislation and regulations being addressed by your local lawmakers.

Your regional NATO office can assist you with strategies and campaigns that have worked in other areas. And Todd Halstead from national NATO works closely with the regionals and helps supply us with positions papers and suggested language for letters and communications with our lawmakers.

It could help not only local exhibitors but exhibitors throughout the country. A victory for one is a victory for all.

From the North Central Scrapbook...

The Cinema 70 (pictured here in about 1970) was located on Highway 81 on the south side of Fargo. The theatre opened in October,

1970 and was a "roadshow" house. It was equipped with Cinemeccanica 35/70mm projectors with 6 track

magnetic stereo sound and a 77x26' curved Cinerama ribbon screen. 200 of its 750 seats were located in a raised smoking loge in the back. It operated on a reserved seat policy the first two years of operation showcasing hits such as "Dr. Zhivago."

There was a full curtain in front of the screen. The male staff wore black suits and the usherettes (10 per shift on weekend nights) wore dresses. The theatre was operated by CEC Theatres and closed in the 1980's.



The Newsreel



Dennis Voy, owner of the **Voy 3 Theatres and 61 Drive-in in Maquoketa, Iowa** celebrated the 50th anniversary of his KMAQ radio station this summer. At just 19-years old, Voy started at the station as an announcer a week before it went on the air August 26, 1958. Among his anniversary promotions, Voy built a float that he used in several area parades this past summer.

Voy purchased the 61 Drive-in over a cup of coffee in early 1972. He then bought the downtown Pastime theatre later that same year so he could use some of the equipment in the new Voy Theatre he was building down the block. He opened the Voy in March of 1973. Voy's Midas touch was working and he bought the building next door and added a second auditorium in 1975 and the building on the other side of him in 1981 for a third screen.



Curt Small, longtime manager of the **Elks Theatre in Rapid City, SD**, purchased the theatre from owners Doug and Lori Andrews on August 1st. The Elks is a downtown Rapid City landmark. The former Commonwealth Theatres house has a full stage and balcony. Andrews and Small added a second screen in a former upstairs office area of the large building. Small successfully runs the theatre as an intermediate run house at moderate prices. He has promoted several live concerts on stage as well as art and children's movie series.



The **14-plex theatre at the Mall of America** has been taken over by the landlords. It opened as a General Cinema Theatre in 1992. When AMC bought GCC, the theatre's name changed to reflect the new corporate identity. This year lease negotiations between AMC and the mall fell through and the lease was not renewed. September 1, the theatre closed. The mall owners put in some love seats and a 21 and over VIP auditorium with alcohol service. They also added a desert bar, real butter for the popcorn and new staff uniforms. The mall re-opened the theatre Friday, September 12. The theatre suffers the competitive disadvantage of mildly sloped auditorium floors as opposed to the newer stadium theatres surrounding it. According to announcements a planned addition to the mega-mall includes a new stadium 20-plex. Several local operators have looked at the future location.

- Newsreel continued on back page

CEC Theatres recently purchased the building that housed their 7-plex theatre in Norfolk, NE from the AMF bowling company. Besides housing the theatre, the building complex also included AMF's bowling alley, a restaurant and a bar. CEC took over operations of all those businesses putting them into several new industries for the company.



May 21, **CEC Theatres** closed their Hudson, WI. 9-plex and opened their all-new 12-plex in a new building in the same town.



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The Newsreel cont. from page 7

When it rains it pours. Peter Schoell's Plaza Theatre in Montevideo has been attacked by both careless drivers and nature in the past months. In April, a teenager became confused and ran his pickup truck into the front of the building. Of course, the brick



isn't made anymore so special brick had to be ordered to make the repairs. When the brick finally arrived in June and repairs were about to begin, lightning hit a 30 foot brick sign tower that had been on top of the building for 30 years, bringing the tower crashing onto the roof and front wall. Falling bricks punched a hole in the roof and bent two girders. To meet codes, six girders have to be replaced and the sign has to be rebuilt to new standards. Oh the joy of owning real estate!

On the positive side, the theatre was used in November as a setting for the MTV "Made" program. Because of the damage, the cinematographer had to use a free standing sign away from the building for his exterior shots.

LEFT: Before the pickup went through the rental store windows and wall on left side and the 30 foot sign before being struck by lightning.

BELOW: The collapsed tower, wall and hole in the lower roof.

