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Shakespeare fest gets another boost

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PRESCOTT -For the second time in 2011, the St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival has been visited by Leeds-Grenville MPP Steve Clark with good news.

On Sunday morning, Clark joined the festival's new general manager Rebecca Campbell in announcing the \$28,000 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant the organization has received.

"It's nice to be back again to provide funds to this organization," said Clark. "[The Shakespeare festival] shows the wonderful importance of arts in the community."

Clark presented the organization with a \$24,000 grant from the Ontario Arts Council in February.

Clark said the grant is extremely important for a group that comes from "modest beginnings."

The grant will be used to hire a volunteer co-ordinator to oversee the many volunteers upon whom the festival relies.

Campbell, whose position of general manager officially begins on Tuesday, is looking forward to having "another set of hands to co-ordinate all the volunteers."

In the past, the group worked with about 300 volunteers, who assist in all aspects of the festival. Campbell hopes to increase this number by 10 per cent in the 2011 season.

Volunteers assist with much of the festival's behind-the-scenes necessities. They assist with wardrobe and costumes, put out road signs during the season and set up actor's apartments, among many other things.

The new full-time employee will likely be the first person one sees when they enter the Shakespeare Festival's headquarters, with a desk immediately inside the door because so many volunteers come in regularly.

As well as overseeing the volunteers during the festival season, the co-ordinator will also organize volunteer training and appreciation events.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation provides grants to charitable and not-for-profit community organizations regarding volunteerism.

This is the third significant donation the Shakespeare Festival has received from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The first was a start-up grant in the festival's inaugural year. The second funded a two-year general manager position.

Grants and donations are integral for the Shakespeare Festival. Ticket sales make up a small portion of the income necessary in running the annual festival.

Other major contributors of \$10,000 or more are the government of Ontario, the Ontario Arts Council, and Robert and Sandra Lawn.

This year marks the ninth season for the Shakespeare Festival with performances of Twelfth Night and All's Well That Ends Well and a four-date Sunday series.

There are also two pre-season plays. Toad will be presented Friday, May 13

and Saturday, May 14. Jake's Gift, a drama about a Second World War veteran and the anniversary of the D-Day landings will be presented on the D-Day anniversary, Monday, June 6.

For more information on the Shakespeare festival's pre-season and regular season performances, visit <http://www.stlawrenceshakespeare.ca> or call 613-925-5788.

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