

Irmo-Chapin LEADER

by Kristi Antley

Kristen Cobb

Kristen Cobb, executive director of the Harbison Theatre at Midlands Technical College in Irmo, has one main goal: to reach as many people as possible with the cultural experience of live acting, dancing, and singing. Her relationship with theatre began in Camden, South Carolina, acting in high school performances and working for the Patchwork Players. Originally from Florida, she obtained a degree in broadcast journalism from USC and worked on film and commercial projects with ABC affiliates. “Prior to settling into the arts administration world, I quickly began to realize the value of theatre in the lifelong relationships I made and saw a parallel to sports. Preparing for and executing a show is a collaborative ‘team’ effort of strength, skill, timing, and patience that fosters a healthy dynamic,” explains Kristen. “There is so much more that goes on behind the scenes to shape and mold memories for a lifetime.”

She gained valuable insight and expertise in her 10 years as executive director of the Fine Arts Center in Kershaw County in Camden and influenced local businesses to invest in and promote theatre through marketing. Such a position requires flexibility and spans from screening auditions to choosing performances to stage-specific operations, along with raising her two beautiful children, a son who is a freshman in college and a daughter who is a freshman in high school. In a world of texts and emails, her passion is to encourage children and adults to step out of their comfort zone and witness live theatre for themselves, making the experience up-close and personal.

An intrinsic asset, the 400-seat venue makes an economic impact on Irmo and surrounding cities bringing in revenue from dinner, clothing, and hotel accommodations. The state-of-the-art

facility can be rented for business or family functions, performances, speakers, or special events and partners with local children’s theaters, The Recreation Commission and the Chapin Community Theater. While education, training, and opportunities on stage are available for students, it is a misconception that only local and college talent is showcased. Masterclasses, mentoring, and interaction between visiting accomplished artists and performers are not only encouraged but facilitated. Many prestigious tours of unique and high caliber are held, such as Columbia City Jazz, the Philharmonic and the Texas Tenors, and are highlighted by the state-of-the-art lighting and sound features. It is one of the only outlets for modern dance as opposed to the traditional dance-like ballet that people often expect. Quality, education, and professionalism are of upmost importance, and volunteers are always needed to serve as ushers, concession staff, and marketing assistants.

It’s a one-of-a-kind experience – and performances sell out fast. Pricing is set to make it possible for everyone to attend, with affordable ticket packages available for families and groups. Most of the shows are appropriate for preteens and older, but there are a few that are appropriate for younger children, and there is always something for everyone. A full listing of performance schedules and descriptions with prices can be found at www.harbisontheatre.org. ■



Harbison Theatre
at Midlands Technical College
7300 College St., Irmo, SC 20063
(803) 407-5011