



IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Ryan and Sharpay (left) audition for the high school musical while the Wildcat basketball team (center) plays a key game and Gabriella (right) competes in the science decathlon.

High School Reunion

High School Musical hits the Classic Center stage as **Oconee Youth Playhouse** reprises the popular Disney production for its 10th anniversary season

The extravagant sets and large cast of Oconee Youth Playhouse's "High School Musical" at the Classic Center this January prove just how far the company has come since their humble debut a decade ago with "How to Eat Like a Child" in the more modest auditorium at Athens Academy. This reprisal of their 2008 sold-out adaptation of *HSM* will be the capstone in OYP's already successful 10th anniversary season that opened in August with "Seussical" and included a November run of "Big." Founded by UGA graduate Terra Hannon in 1998, OYP has produced more than 30 shows involving close to 800 kids, positioning the non-profit organization as a cultural stronghold within the Athens community.

First performed by OYP in April of 2008, this *HSM* performance will mark the company's second partnership with the Classic Center. After the popularity of their September 2007 production of "Beauty and the Beast," the Classic Center invited OYP to join their Community Series, which aims to showcase local talent on a professional platform.

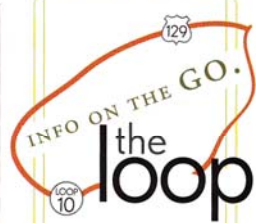
Heralded by many as this generation's "Grease," the Disney Channel's "High School Musical" tells the love story of popular jock Troy and brainy new-

girl Gabriella as they secretly audition for the lead roles in East High's musical. The theatrical adaptation of *HSM*—outfitted with more songs and dance numbers than its television movie predecessor—has become a Broadway smash-hit and the youth-oriented content made it a perfect fit for OYP.

HSM, like most OYP productions, debuted at the Oconee County Civic Center, a smaller theater accommodating about 500 seats compared to the 2,000 seats of the Classic Center. OYP rehearsals are held in the 10,000-square foot performing arts facility in Watkinsville that the company shares with the Hannon's sister business, Oconee Youth School of Performance. Offering voice lessons, acting, musical theater and various forms of dance, OYSP was founded in August 1998 and is separate from OYP which opened in December 1998. Seeking a companion performance outlet where OYSP students could not only showcase their skills but also perform, the Hannons have constantly strived to make OYP as professional—and close to Broadway—as possible.

"I love when people see an OYP show and say that they won't miss another," says co-director Shane Hannon.

—Nathalie Espinol



BEST REC

For the fourth consecutive year, the Georgia Recreation and Park Association named **Athens Clarke County Leisure Services** State Agency of The Year. Competing against larger cities like Atlanta and Macon, the award was presented at the Classic Center during November's Georgia Recreation and Park Association Conference.

OLE! PLAY

The Barrow County Board of Education approved a proposal to create a mariachi class at **Apalachee High School**. Beginning in spring, the class will teach students to play and learn the history of the Mexican folk music, and is the first of its kind in the state.

BUS PLUS

September marked a prestigious honor for the **Athens Multimodal Transportation Center** when The Urban Land Institute of Atlanta gave the Center the Development of Excellence Award, judged on sustainability, community need, architecture and land use.