



## Chronicles

Written and Edited by Wilton High School Students

# "Roadside Theater" dispels hillbilly stereotype

by Marcia Johnson

In the 1960s in Kentucky and Virginia, a Federal Government agency saw years of neglect and stereotyping in the area. Children of the area were becoming embarrassed of their heritage and started to follow the stereotype because they wanted to set up a mining community. Instead, people wanted to stay on their land. They wanted a change. So they went to the government and demanded they do something. The result: "Appalshop."

"Appalshop" promotes ancestry through music, crafts, and theatre. They emphasize valuable traditions that need to be handed down. They create a new pride in the people in the Appalachian area. Their purpose is to share that pride with everyone in the world. "Roadside Theatre", a

division of "Appalshop", was established to specialize in music and storytelling. The group which came to visit us was part of the "Roadside Theatre" group.

"Roadside Theatre" performed at our high school assembly on September 23. They started with "Cuckoo", a special sing-along. It got the crowd singin' and stompin' right from the start. April Sperstad, as Polly, Paula Blake, as Betsy, and Jennifer Norton, as Mutsimeg, acted out an old Appalachian tale. While looking up through the bleachers, I saw not a movement and heard not a sound. They left us themes to consider, such as "If you don't trouble trouble, trouble won't trouble you." How is that for a mouthful? They also encouraged us to listen to our elders. "It's about finding the future. But no

matter where you go in life, remember where you came from."

"Roadside Theatre" also conducted a special workshop afterwards for students in speech and drama classes at WHS. We split into four different groups and each group discussed different topics ranging from life in Wilton to war and old memories. The time we spent together we concluded as well worth it, and everyone left feeling better about themselves.

I think Mrs. Hoekstra said it best when she stated, "They are very accomplished actors and actresses and they tear at your heartstrings." Indeed.

If you want to reach them, they may be contacted at:  
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