

## Teen Challenge Graduation Ceremony Takes Place in Rochester

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unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Pastor Mark said that God has truly done exceeding abundantly in his life, and knows that the Lord will do the same for the men in Teen Challenge. They just need to keep their trust in Him.



Photo by Selah Images

**Walter Thomas**

**Director of Rochester Teen Challenge**

One aspect of the students at Teen Challenge's day is choir practice. The students shared a couple of songs, as well as a skit demonstrating the idea of baggage and how we must let go of things like anger, guilt and pride. Finally, the two graduates received their certificates stating that they fulfilled both their group and personal study books. Pastors and those who had sown into the men came forward and prayed for them as they prepare for the next part of their journey. They will now go to "God's Mountain" in PA where they will continue their studies as well as have opportunities to earn a GED and/or learn vocational skills. Upon completion of the program these men will have "the life coping skills necessary to pursue life goals, and become a productive member of their family and community." Everyone, especially the pastors, families and other students are extremely proud of the accomplishments that these men have made and are looking forward to their future success.

Teen Challenge was started in 1958 in Brooklyn, NY and the Rochester Teen Challenge began in 1968. The "in-resident center is for men 18 and over with life - controlling problems such as drug and alcohol dependence and trouble with the law, who desire a life change." The program has been nationally recognized and Time Magazine has called Teen Challenge drug treatment "far better than secular treatments."

There are many ways to get involved at Teen Challenge. People are needed to speak at morning Bible studies or during chapel services. They also need volunteers to help take the men to places, such as doctor appointments. There are also many opportunities to give financially to the program.

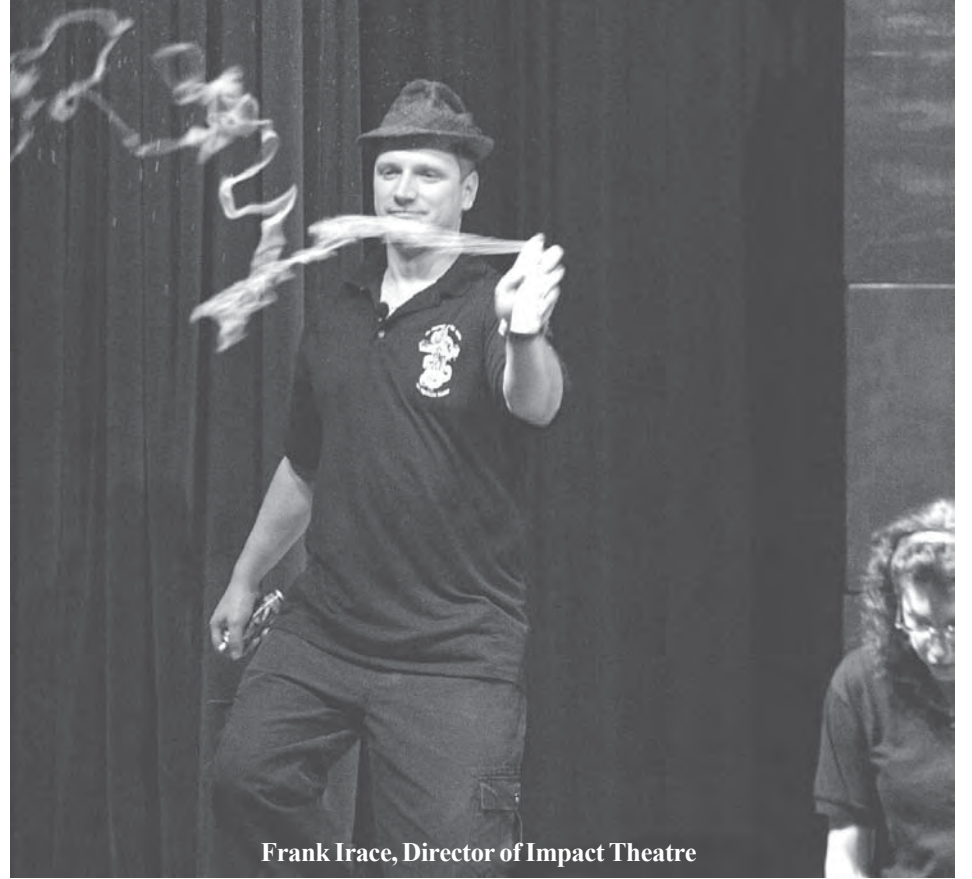
The Rochester site is located at 1140 Norton Street in Rochester, NY. To find out more information, please call (585) 232-6298 or email roctc@juno.com. You can also visit their website at [www.rochestertc.org](http://www.rochestertc.org).

# Impact Theater: Real Life on the Stage Brings Real Jesus to the Audience

By Doug Hickerson

Frank Irace moved to Palmyra from New York City in 1987. He began using drama to teach Biblical principles in his church. Over several years, his dramas dealt with hardcore societal problems such as spousal abuse, abortion, rape, and "those things that are typically taboo to talk about." He wrote a drama for a church performing arts contest in Webster, based on his experiences as a youth director. The lead character was a youth who felt rejection throughout his life and the drama ended with a gun to his head and suicide. "Not so much to be sensationalistic, but to be real," Irace said. Soon after the show, he was surrounded by shocked adults protesting such a message was not appropriate "around here" and suggesting that he "take it to the inner city." From counseling and working with suburban teens for about five years, "I know what they are going through," he responded. "They may be playing church with you, but inwardly they are dying a slow death with no true relationship with Jesus Christ. This drama was telling them that, even if they feel that no one is listening, Jesus Christ always is listening and is there for them. There is never a situation so desperate as to take your own life."

"I saw the Master's hand on this and within a couple of years I sought a place to do this type of drama and arts and to recruit both adults and teenagers for a troupe called the 'In Your Face Players,'" Irace said about the genesis of Impact Theatre. Its goal from the beginning has been to challenge people in their spiritual walk and to minister to those who are struggling with life. "I found a place on Main Street Palmyra that seated about 40 people. It was GREAT! Very intimate theatre... what I was used to in the smaller off-Broadway theatres I attended in Greenwich Village. You know, where you basically can reach out and touch your audience. This is what I love to do and how better to do it than with the gospel of Jesus Christ!" Irace compares the remote and white-robed Jesus seen in some movies with the real life Jesus of scripture who mixed with all sorts of people up close. "That is what we do as a troupe, we touch people and we mingle among them. We put Jesus Christ and His words up in



**Frank Irace, Director of Impact Theatre**

your face. We try to uncover sin and darkness that is hidden in the hearts and house walls of us all and expose those things in light of the scriptures. Some don't like us for that, but others do, and we have a very loyal audience. We have not looked back since and have been doing it for eight consecutive years without interruption every month except December."

The first location became crowded, and Palmyra town officials invited Impact Theatre to rent the town hall facility where the group has been for a few years. It provides 120 seats in a cabaret-type setting. Once a month, Impact Theatre presents a night of brief "vignettes" by the In Your Face Players. On the same night another Christian artist might appear with acts

such as music, story-telling, dance and mime. It is dessert theatre with six bakers in the group providing a variety of different homemade desserts each month. The evening of entertainment, the dessert, and the available counseling materials and Bibles are all free.

Impact Theatre "has some of the most talented original Christian artists in the Rochester area," according to the web site. Irace was asked to comment further. "I do not pretend to be something we are not. We are amateur theatre... an all volunteer-led organization. The 10 to 15 volunteers come from all walks of life, men, women, all ages, from various churches in surrounding communities. We staff our own writers for our drama material, and our own actors and actresses. Most of these volunteers have full time jobs. (Irace is full time at Xerox.) They come, set-up, take down, bake, act, clean, memorize, minister, give money and serve without expecting anything in return. I consider us very talented. We may not be as polished as a lot of local theatre companies but we strive to please our Master and, as a director, I expect that level of dedication and intensity."

Funding comes from the audience (a donation box in the lobby), monthly "partners," and missions funding from Irace's church, Living Word Assembly of God in Ontario, N.Y. Impact Theatre is not affiliated with any particular church, but Irace believes in spiritual accountability. "I do put myself and the ministry under the covering of my pastor and church," he said. The theatre is also a joint endeavor at the Irace home in Palmyra. "I am truly blessed to have my wife and son be such and integral part of this ministry."

(A performance schedule and other Impact Theatre information can be found at [www.impactdrama.com](http://www.impactdrama.com).)



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