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All right, I'll buy the theater

I would like to buy the Peterborough Community Theatre, please. And I would like to keep it a theater. Every community needs a community theater.

It was not until I began this job last spring that I went there, but I sought out the 102-year-old theater just like I knew it was important to find community theaters everywhere I've been: the Avalon on Connecticut



BRANDON LATHAM
Reporter

Avenue when I lived in Washington, D.C., the iconic Angelika Film Center near where I worked in New York City one summer.

Growing up in Merrimack, it was the Wilton Town Hall Theatre. I was there at least once a week from the time I got my driver's license, and other nights I was in

Concord at Red River Theatres. Don't get me started on the Milford Drive-In.

I learned at these historic cathedrals of cinema that to see film as they were meant to be seen. That is to say, go to the movies, turn off your cell phone, turn down the lights, and sit close enough to lose the edges of the frame. It's an experience no Netflix, Fandor or FilmStruck account can recreate.

I learned that they do not only make the movie better, but that they make the community better. There is nothing wrong with catching the latest studio tentpole at the megaplex, but there's value in seeing a small movie in a small theater.

They bring the community closer to the world. In a time when people are increasingly failing to understand one another, specialty movies can generate incomparable empathy for, as some examples, a gay man coming of age in a drug-filled Miami neighborhood ("Moonlight"), or a motley gang of young adults road-tripping through Middle America doing whatever it takes to get by ("American Honey"). Neither of these could be found at Cinemagic.

They also bring the people in the community closer to each other. Take Christmas in Wilton for example, as dozens of locals pack into that 131-year-old room to celebrate the season together with "It's a Wonderful Life." In most towns, residents spend that weekend in their homes, scarcely looking up from their individual binge-watches.

"To me, movie house is a campfire where we all go to sit alone together and be amazed," New York Times media columnist David Carr tweeted when some considered theaters dangerous after the shooting in Colorado in 2012. "I ain't letting go of that."

Neither am I. Peterborough's arts community is one of the richest in the country, but would be incomplete without a movie theater.