



Director of
Murder On The Last Train To Clarksville.

Leslie Pipan has been seen on the stage at the Fine Arts Center acting and recently directing, but audience goers may be surprised to learn that she was never involved in theatre until she moved to Clarksville and joined the Double Nickel Players (DNP). DNP is a group of performers who are over fifty-five. They are part of the Clarksville Community Players and typically present two shows a year. Like most members of the DNP group, Leslie is retired after thirty years as a high school special education teacher in NC. Having managed many different personalities in her classroom and as a department chair, working in different schools and with both parents and students, Leslie has adapted to directing easily but equates directing a large cast to “a bit like herding cats.” Her goal, as well as the group’s mission, is to make this a fun event for everyone.

Leslie made her directing debut last May with the group’s *Sunday Funnies* - a collection of skits the DNP group put together for a one-day performance. Unlike that event held at the Fine Arts Center, the dinner theatre performances are murder mysteries performed at the community center with dinner and cocktails served. This means the performers are rehearsing in the theatre months in advance but not with their set in the space where they’ll be performing. For this show, the action takes place in two acts separated by meal courses, and Leslie has the performers of each act rehearsing separately; first act performers include cast who set the scene and deliver the backstory – act two performers are the murder suspects. It will be October before the whole cast will work together. But Leslie is excited to share something new with the audience this year which is a raised platform that will fit in a recessed space at the community center so audiences of the past who may not have been able to see all the action over a table mate’s head, will have a better view of the actors.

Leslie will be directing seventeen cast members, one of whom is her husband, Greg Pipan. The couple moved here after a visit to a relative’s lake home in Michigan opened their eyes to lake life. At the time, they had never heard of Clarksville but when they returned home to Greensboro, NC, Greg suggested Leslie scour the web and find a lake not too far from their home. Initially they bought a 600 square foot home just two hours away from their Greensboro home, making it easy to come up on weekends. “We came up all the time and fell in love with this town, the energy and how sweet it was and all the things to do; and we just thought it was a cute little place.” Eventually they bought another home they now call Camp Pipan with a dock, boats, a lovely lake view, neighbors in the woods, and moved permanently to Clarksville in 2016. As Leslie self describes, they “jumped in with both feet” and made lots of new friends, got involved with St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church, the Backpack Buddies program, the Ruritans, and of course the theatre. Of our community, Leslie is quick to add, “I just appreciate this whole small-town community. The people have big hearts and the pockets are generous and it’s just a comfortable place to live.” ~ Written by Holly Stadtler