

T SENIOR TIMES

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GERMAN VILLAGE SENIOR PORTAYS MANY CHARACTERS

She stays active performing in community theatre

By Mary Anne White

Even before her first performance in her 3rd Grade elementary school play, Josie Merkle knew that she wanted to act. She may have been influenced by her mother's love of the theatre and being an actor, but it was Josie's own enthusiasm that propelled her into becoming a theatre major and performing roles in radio, television, films, and onto the stage in theatre productions.

Since 2010, Merkle has performed in a variety of Columbus community theatre groups, including CATCO, Gallery Players, and Actors Theatre. In September, she will perform in another stage role—this time at the Abbey Theater of Dublin.

Merkle told *Senior Times*, "I am preparing to perform as Alexandra—an 80-year-old mother of adult children. Two of the children are unsuccessful in their attempt to convince her it is time for her to sell her home and move into a nursing home. The two siblings eventually ask their brother—who is estranged from Alexandra—to try to talk with his mother. With over 30 pages of lines to remember, it's like trying to learn a monologue. It's a storyline to which many older people and their adult children can relate."

Senior Times recently had an opportunity to



Josie Merkle at home



Dr. Ruth Westheimer actually came to one of the performances of *Becoming Dr. Ruth*

speak with Merkle about her experiences as an actor.

Senior Times: What is it about acting that appeals to you?

Merkle: Being able to develop a character and bring that character to life.

Senior Times: Do you prefer acting in film, tele-

vision, or on stage—and why?

Merkle: Oh, definitely the stage. It is great to be able to hear the immediate response of the audience to the characters and dialogue. An actor isn't able to enjoy that when acting in movie or television roles.

Senior Times: Do you have a secret to memorizing all the lines of the many plays in which you perform?

Merkle: There is a connection between movement and memory. Moving the body in a repetitive motion helps the brain remember. I often walk around Schiller Park with my script in hand and mentally rehearse the lines while I'm walking.

Senior Times: Do you remember lines from previous characters that you have played, or are they replaced by learning your newest role?

Merkle: I recall some lines from some characters I've played in the past, but I focus more on the role that I am currently playing.

Senior Times: When you attend a play, are you able to view it as a member of the audience, or do you focus on the way an actor is portraying a character and consider how you would do it differently?

Merkle: For the most part, I'm able to just en-

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Die,
Mommie,
Die!



Motherlode

Dark of the Moon



The Children



True West

Merkle has portrayed many roles for various Columbus Theatre groups and productions. To see more go to josiemerkle.com.

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