



QNEK BUSINESS PROFILE

In 1993, after working for two years as an Artist-in-Residence in area schools, Lynn Leimer identified and filled a cultural niche in the North Country by creating QNEK Productions. With humble beginnings at the Fox Hall Inn at Lake Willoughby, QNEK's search for a home led from Jay Peak Resort and Newport City Elementary School to the perfect venue of the historic Haskell Opera House, when the Company was invited by the Board of Trustees to become the Resident Theatre Company. As the only International Theatre Company in the State of Vermont, QNEK has become a local legend since 1993. "Providing the Best of Broadway and Beyond Right in Your Own Backyard" is more than a slogan, and it's only the tip of the arts infrastructure that QNEK projects. This world class, award-winning company, named the "Premiere Acting Company in the NEK" early on by the Caledonian Record, has presented over 130 professional-quality theatrical performances, and has forged highly successful liaisons with schools and charitable organizations. Annually, from three to five new plays are sent to the company from across the country for possible production. The company has had a positive impact on the Travel and Tourism Industry in the North Country, drawing audiences from as far away as Ontario, California, Florida, and Maine, directly and indirectly helping to sustain jobs in a community with the highest rate of unemployment in the state of Vermont.

Philosophy. In its successful endeavors to interface with an international population, QNEK presents events that evoke imagination, provoke passion for the arts, invoke community support, and revoke any naysayers. Leimer's personal philosophy is: "Never tell me something can't be done, because I'll find a way to prove you wrong . . . DREAM BIG!"

Cultural Enrichment and Educational Outreach. QNEK has developed apprenticeship programs for students ages 13–19 to work with professional actors and technicians; scholarships for graduating seniors; Academy for Children in Theatre (ACT 1) for students ages 9–13; Artist-in-Residencies for local schools to educate and create an awareness of the arts; educational intensives, such as the Scriptwriting Workshop for NCUHS Contemporary Voices Project; free assistance to area schools—loan of costumes, sets, props, and technical assistance. Each Season QNEK features emerging artists, new works, and promising talent. The creative process is captured with clarity by new actors, youth ballet, and most recently, new playwrights, whose "Page-to-Stage" presentations of ten-minute original plays have provided QNEK with the inspiration-filled opportunity to collaborate in the classroom with students, many of whom had never read or seen a play prior to writing one.

Senior Citizens. While caring for her elderly mother, Leimer saw an opportunity to integrate and invigorate the senior population by utilizing their volunteer spirit for QNEK and the Haskell and by tapping into their talents on stage. The residual effects are beneficial not only to the seniors' quality of life, but also to the arts. Subsequently, Community National Bank's Community Circle Program (55+ club) incorporates discounted QNEK tickets as a perk for thousands of members. QNEK has also created a liaison with the Red Hat Society (women 50 and older).

Social Conscience. As a response to the many challenges of living in a relatively isolated area of the state with a depressed economy, giving back to the community is a philanthropic philosophy held dear to Leimer. Since 1993, QNEK has annually held benefit performances for or given donations to the following charitable organizations: American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, North Country Hospital, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Vermont Symphony Orchestra, Sacred Heart School, Goodrich Memorial Library, Breast Cancer Awareness, Frontier Animal Society – US, Frontier Animal Society – Canada, Unitarian Universalist Parish of Derby Line, Vermont Public Television, Memphremagog Arts Collaborative, Haskell Free Library and Opera House, General Federation of Women's Clubs—Newport Chapter, Dialysis Unit of North Country Hospital, NEK Travel and Tourism Association, Newport Rotary Club, Williamstown School, Girl Scouts of America, Elks Club of Newport, Montgomery Grange Hall Restoration Project, and North Country Union High School DECA Program. The community has, in turn, given back to QNEK in the form of generous advertising and underwriting.

Grants. QNEK Productions has written and received the following grants on behalf of the Haskell Opera House: Incubator Without Walls (IWOW) partnered with the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) for a business plan, a marketing strategies plan, and a custom-built, bi-lingual website with e-commerce capabilities; Vermont Arts Council; National Endowment for the Arts; Plum Creek; Derby Tax Payers Association; Wal-Mart; and the Vermont Woman's Fund. (See *Haskell Annual Report* for details).

Inventory. QNEK has amassed an extraordinary inventory housed in a two-story barn built specifically for this purpose. Approximate worth of inventory is \$500,000, which includes period and specialty costumes, over 1000 hats, props, wigs, makeup, sets, backdrops, furniture, lighting, and special effects equipment.

Employment. Members of the *QNEK SWAT Team* (Specialists with Artistic Talent) are brought in on an as-needed basis per show and are also available to the Haskell. They include: Susan-Lynn Johns, Associate Director/Graphics Designer; Anita Morin, Music Director/Grant Writer; Mark Violette, Associate Music Director/Pianist/Conductor; Dennis Ziegler, Technical Director; Chase Gosselin, Associate Technical Director/Lighting Designer; Laura Carpenter, Choreographer; Carol Woodard, Costumer; Sue Kelley Harkey and Katrin Mooney, Photographers. Professional actors are hired as needed. For QNEK Team Members, Leimer acts as a liaison for off-season employment at other venues. Haskell Opera House operations have employed three security guards, one house manager, one box office manager, one technician, and one janitor.