



# PEER *connections*

A PUBLICATION OF THOMAS M. WERNERT CENTER | JUNE 2023

## DON'T MISS THIS

### Stories Worth Telling

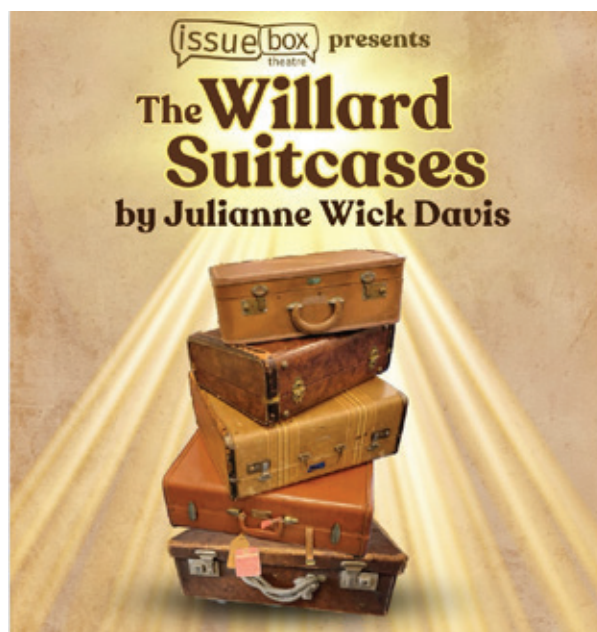
The Thomas M. Wernert Center (TMWC) is pleased to participate in the Toledo premier of *The Willard Suitcases*, a musical by Julianne Wick Davis. TMWC also is supporting an exhibit of photographs by Jon Crispin that inspired the production.

“More than 400 suitcases were found in the attic of the Willard Psychiatric Center, containing remnants of lives forgotten,” says Rosie Best, Artistic Director of Toledo-based Issue Box Theatre. “We are doing this production to bring visibility and dignity to those whose lives have often been dismissed, ignored, or silenced.”

In 1995, a handful of forgotten suitcases were discovered in the recently closed

Willard Psychiatric Center in upstate New York, untouched since their owners checked in years before. The performance of the musical and the display of the photographs uses the arts to illuminate the stories of the patients and to acknowledge the history of mental health in America.

Issue Box Theatre uses the arts to address social justice. Whether working with people with mental illness, survivors of human trafficking, or young artists, Issue Box Theatre works to amplify the stories of the vulnerable with dignity.



To make a reservation for the June 28 performance at the Thomas M. Wernert Center, please call 419-242-3000.

## SEE THE PERFORMANCE



### ***THE WILLARD SUITCASES*** IS FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

**Thursday, June 8, 2023 | 6:30PM**  
Toledo Lucas County Main Branch Library

**Thursday, June 15, 2023 | 7:00PM**  
St. Paul's United Methodist Church

**Wednesday, June 28, 2023 | 6:00PM**  
Thomas M. Wernert Center

**Friday, July 14, 2023 | 7:30PM**  
Sylvania Northview High School

The Willard Suitcases production is made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts, Toledo Lucas County, The Arts Commission of Greater Toledo, Toledo Lucas County Public Library, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Lucas County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board, Sylvania Northview High School, and the Thomas M. Wernert Center.

## SEE THE EXHIBIT

A selection of Jon Crispin's Willard Suitcases photographs will be on display in the Toledo Lucas County Public Library Main Branch Gallery from June 8 – July 14, 2023.

The images are an intimate glimpse into the lives of people with various diagnoses, but represent thousands of people who were institutionalized in the United States.

## RECOVERY TOGETHER

# Advocacy at TMWC

Thomas M. Wernert Center recently launched a Recovery Together Advocacy Group that focuses on ways members can better advocate for themselves, their peers, and the community. TMWC members began their first meeting in March with a group discussion on what advocacy means, why it is important, and areas they would like to grow as advocates. The group also brainstormed ways to engage in community volunteer opportunities.

To date, the group's efforts have focused on collecting food items as part of the Equality Toledo Food Drive, assembling toiletry bags with shampoo, conditioner, soap, and lotion for distribution to TMWC and residents of Uptown Toledo, and participating this summer in the Keep Toledo Lucas County Beautiful 'Litter League.' Team Recovery

Together is excited to be a part of keeping Toledo clean!

In addition to their endeavors to give back to the community, the participants of the Recovery Together Advocacy Group continue to learn more about what it means

to be a strong advocate. Typical meetings include discussions about types of advocacy, volunteering, communication skills, building momentum, challenges, and barriers.

The Recovery Together Advocacy Group is open to all TMWC members and meets in the Clubroom on the first three Tuesdays of the month at 12:00 p.m.



Allison, Meg, and Jean pick up trash outside TMWC for City of Toledo's Litter League competition.

This and other TMWC programs are funded in part by grants from The David C. and Lura M. Lovell Foundation Fund and the Care Fund of the Greater Toledo Community Foundation.

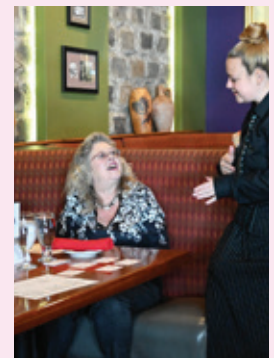
# Thank You!



**HEART & SOUL:**  
**CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY**  
hosted their 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebrity Wait Night on Tuesday, May 9, 2023.

Thank you, for another wonderful event benefiting the Thomas M. Wernert Center and Northwest Ohio Psychiatric Hospital.

From all of us at Thomas M. Wernert Center, we are incredibly grateful for the local community working to erase the stigma associated with mental illness.





# PEER SUPPORT IN ACTION



Thank you to all for supporting TMWC's Annual Health & Resource Fair on May 5, 2023!



TMWC staff at Brookwood Metropark. The group participated in a day long retreat focused on allyship, identity, and team growth.





THOMAS M. WERNERT CENTER  
FOR MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY & SUPPORT

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**MISSION**

To improve the quality of life for persons living with mental illness by offering hope and peer-driven programs that address recovery through education, advocacy and peer support.

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SUPPORTED BY:




recovery  
**together**

TMWC is Proud to Partner with  
Issue Box Theatre and Its Production of  
***The Willard Suitcases***  
Wednesday, June 28, 2023 | 6:00PM  
Thomas M. Wernert Center

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