

Community Impact Statement

On a chilly October evening, some sixty odd Bay Area residents from all walks of life gathered together in a small theater to watch nine local women perform a comedic murder mystery set in a retirement home. For two precious hours, the building was a raucous whirlwind of laughter as the performers showcased their talents. Following the show, the audience and actors attended a gala so congratulations and well wishes could be exchanged alongside earnest questions about the effort and skill it took to entertain the local community that night.

Santa Clara's community was enriched by the teamwork and dedication which produced such levity and joy. Witnessing their friends and neighbors put their all into an engaging, hilarious narrative that intimately captivated their attentions as effectively as what they might witness on television or in a movie theater reminds people that we aren't alone. As technology advances into the realm of artificial intelligence and modern conveniences lull us into well-meaning self-isolation, staying inside glued to screens makes us forget the real world and the people who inhabit it so physically close to us. And if we don't exactly forget their physical presence, we have a tendency to forget the full depth of their humanity without face-to-face interactions.

The word *sonder* is used to describe the realization that each individual is living a life as complex and vivid as your own. Live theater like what Santa Clara Players produces can't help but conjure *sonder* in the psyche when you experience it. And when that realization strikes you about people living less than an hour's drive from your house, who are as immersed in the culture of Santa Clara as you are, your bonds to the community strengthen. We are reminded that we are, in fact, a community. And people whose daily realities are no more alien than your own familiar routines have created art meant to delight you and everybody else who lives here that is both accessible and close to home

By bringing neighbors together in a shared space, fostering appreciation for local talent, and reinforcing the bonds that make Santa Clara a connected and vibrant community, this production exemplified the positive impact that community theater can provide.