

The Paradise Center Presents

Django Oakcedar

Plains High School

Spotlight on the Arts – September 2024



Interviewed by Kristin Cole

“Spotlight on the Arts” by The Paradise Center honors and encourages students in the arts by highlighting their talent and acknowledging the support they receive through their schools and teachers.

In the vibrant world of performing arts, drama students emerge as the torchbearers of expression. Among them is Django Oakcedar, an ambitious seventeen-year-old Senior. He has held various jobs in town, and his family has owned property here for decades. Currently, he serves as the vice president of the

student council, the president of the National Honor Society, and the president of the drama troupe at Plains High School. Oakcedar seems well-prepared for acting. His charisma comes from his mother, who was occasionally a musician. In high school, his father constructed sets for dramatic productions.

Oakcedar’s first acting was in elementary school in a Montana Children’s Theatre play in which he had the leading role. In high school, some friends encouraged him to join the drama club during his freshman year, but they abandoned the club shortly after. He, however, remained committed to drama for all four years of high school. His high school roles include productions such as “Wing and a Prayer,” “Clue,” “Conflict,” and “A Piece of Heaven.” Oakcedar practices for about a month prior to each performance, learning his lines by pacing in circles until he can remember the order of the dialogue.

Last year in the Plains drama club, he attended the multi-day Montana Thespian Festival at the University of Montana. Drama clubs from various schools across Montana brought a play to perform on a stage in front of hundreds of peers. The Plains group performed a short play titled *An Experiment*, in which Oakcedar played the villain

– Dr. Soles – a behavior doctor conducting a bizarre experiment involving subjects who had to kill each other. This role experience was unique and is to-date his favorite.

The play required minimal set design, just five chairs and the actors. Although he felt they performed well, they stood out at the festival as the only school from a small rural area. Other schools had elaborate sets and costumes, as well as student-written plays. Oakcedar commented that he doesn't see the school's size or location as negatives. He stated, "Despite lacking the luxuries that other drama clubs had and the limited resources available to us, our performance elicited the same emotional response and applause as the others." He said he considered this event to have been the highlight of his school experience thus far.

Terri Henry, who directs drama at the high school, has been instrumental in his ongoing interest in drama, providing leadership with her extensive theater expertise. He says she is incredible! While he likely won't continue acting in the future, he hopes to earn a finance degree at the University of Montana. He values the arts for their ability to bring culture and diversity. "Through creativity and expression, the arts add color to life -- The performing arts are truly wonderful. Performing in front of an audience provides a joy that is hard to find elsewhere, and you develop a strong bond with your cast." He says if a person has the chance, they should try acting at least once.