Here’s a clue

This junior, and murder mystery play director, loves the theater

*Editor’s note: The Courier-Tribune’s popular “Trailblazer” showcases the positive things young people are doing. If you know someone who fits that description, email name, phone number/email address and a brief description of accomplishments to ajordan@courier-tribune.com or tjjefferies@courier-tribune.com.

**By Terrence Jefferies**

tjjefferies@courier-tribune.com

**ASHEBORO** — Daniel McNeill, an 11th grader at Southwestern Randolph High School (SWRHS), aspires to attend the prestigious University of North Carolina School of the Arts and major in Drama.

“I want to do something in the drama field, preferably Theatre, Broadway, something along those lines,” said McNeill who is taking a big step in realizing his dream with an ambitious project — directing his school’s murder mystery play, “The Bold, The Young, and the Murdered.” He may well be the first student to venture into such uncharted territory. “As far as I am aware, this is the first instance of anyone

**THEATRICAL FLAIR** — Junior Daniel McNeill is directing Southwestern Randolph High School’s murder mystery play, ‘The Bold, The Young, and the Murdered.’

See TRAILBLAZER, page 7A
Trailblazer
From page 1A

at SWRHS student directing," he said.

By Don Zolidis, "The Bold, The Young, and the Murdered" was written specifically for high school students to perform.

A synopsis of the plot goes like this:
"The long-running soap opera 'The Bold and the Young' is in its last days: its hunky hero has self-esteem issues, its villainous old man is more interested in soup, and its heroines are slightly psychopathic. The executive producer gives the squabbling cast an ultimatum: Complete one episode overnight or the show dies. But when the director ends up murdered, and other cast members start dropping like flies, it seems like his threat might actually come true. Can these misfits discover the murderer before the show is literally killed off?"

McNeill, who is active in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and the Beta Club, already has a strong background in theater. He's acted in a number of plays through the Randolph Youth Theatre Company and at his church, Southside Baptist Church in Greensboro, where his father, Dr. Howard McNeill, serves as pastor.

"I have acted in 'The Nifty Fifties,' Shakespeare plays, 'The Three Little Pigs' and 'Night at the Wax Museum,' " he added, ticking off his previous credits. After acting, directing a play seemed the logical next step, and when his chorus teacher, Alyssa Plott, gave him the opportunity to step into the director's seat, he jumped at it.

In fact, he went above and beyond, using money from his part-time job at Starbucks to pay for the scripts and rights to perform the play at SWRHS.

"It was an independent choice to fund the play," explained McNeill, "I wanted more creative control."

He is not paying for the costumes. "The actors were given a costume list by me and are in charge of getting their own costumes. I have been helping them where they have needed my help."

The 16-year-old had another reason for pursuing a murder mystery play. He wanted to give his peers the option to act and participate in a school play that wasn't a musical, which has been about the only offering available in the past few seasons, he said.

When asked how his fellow students have responded to his directorial debut, he said, "I think I have shown them that I care and what I'm doing is something that will maybe help them."

■ Performances of "The Bold, The Young, and the Murdered" are Friday, Nov. 30, and Saturday, Dec. 1, at Southwestern Randolph High School, 1641 Hopewell Friends Road, Asheboro, at 7 p.m. Tickets are $8.