

Family Drive-In Theatre Reopens Under New Management

May 7, 2010 by [Michael Dowling \(Edit\)](#)

As summer blockbuster season begins in earnest this weekend with the release of Ironman 2, a 54 year old tradition in the Northern Shenandoah Valley prepares to fire up the projectors. The Family Drive-In Theatre will open for the 2010 season this Friday night. The theatre has been in continuous operation since 1956 by the Dalke family of Woodstock Va. This year however, it will be under new management. In February, current owner Tim Dalke was ready to make a change so he called Jim Kopp, an old friend who had often mentioned his desire run the drive-in.

"Tim called me up two months ago and said he was ready to retire and asked if I would be interested in operating the theatre," said Jim. "He knew I wanted this and said I was the first one he called."

When the call came Jim didn't waste any time. "Tim said if he couldn't find someone to run it at the end of this year he would be forced to close it. We knew we had to make it happen."

The Koppes signed a 5 Year lease to operate the theatre. "Tim owns all the property and equipment, we are basically just operating it for him. We do have first right of refusal if he ever wants to sell it and of course he knows I've always wanted to keep it as a drive-in."

Jim worked at the Library of Congress for 23 years and lived in Warrenton, VA. He became enamored with the theater during his many visits to the Family Drive-In growing up. "I always told Tim if he was ever interested in selling the theatre to let me know."

After retirement from the Library of Congress, Jim's love for drive-ins took him to North Carolina where he purchased the dilapidated Raleigh Road Outdoor Theatre. "When we bought it, it was in really bad shape and had a lot of problems."

Jim and his wife Megan turned the old theatre around and now operate it year round. They reside in Oxford, North Carolina and are currently commuting between the two theatres.

Preparations for opening night are being handled by long time theatre operators Jay and Nancy Pence. Jay has been the projectionist at the Family Drive-In theatre since 1963. He and Nancy cover all aspects of the operation including concessions, ticket sales, film prep, and projection. Jay also keeps order at the theater making sure no one disrupts the family experience the theatre is known for. "It's always been a great place to take a family," said Jay.

As the proprietors launch the new season Jim said there will be some changes, "We will have a better web presence and will set up a Facebook fan page. We also have set up the site for online ticket purchases." Things will be a little more convenient at the box office as well as the they are now set up to accept credit and debit cards for payment.

Movies For Opening Night Friday, May 7th through Sunday, May 9th are:

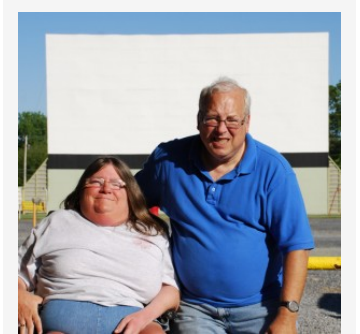
Screen #1:

Ironman 2 (PG-13) Show time: 8:30 PM
Shutter Island (R) – Show time: 10:50 PM

Screen #2:

How to Train Your Dragon (PG) – Show time: 8:30 PM
Diary of a Wimpy Kid (PG) – Show time: 10:15 PM

The Family Drive-In Theatre is located 1 mile South of Stephens City, Virginia on US Rt. 11. Visit their website for information at <http://thefamilydriveintheatre.com/>



Jim and Megan Kopp

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