



Senior Morgan Wallace rehearses his part as Saul Watson for the upcoming comedy, "Play On!" This production take him close to the mark of becoming a National Honor Thespian. Photo by Emily Humble.

# Homecoming king hopes to add another title to his name

BY EMILY HUMBLE  
STAFF REPORTER

Most of the student body may not know senior Morgan Wallace by name, but they definitely would recognize him. He's "that guy who makes announcements during lunch," his voice easily filling the crowded lunchroom without the aid of a microphone. Before homecoming, he bombastically proclaimed his own nomination for homecoming king, earning laughs and applause as he swaggered coolly off the stage.

On Sept. 19, Wallace was named homecoming king at halftime of the football game. Raising his arms in victory, the crown accidentally fell off his head, drawing more laughs from the crowd.

Characterized by his loud personality and involvement in the drama program, Wallace is nearing the achievement of becoming a National Honor Thespian in the International Thespian Society. The word "thespian" may look strange to those unfamiliar with the word, but it simply refers to anything related to drama or theater. Wallace has been in 16 productions since eighth grade, and has been a part of the KPARK drama program all four years in high school, often with leading roles. When he becomes a National Honor Thespian, he will be the first drama student in school history to do so.

"Since I was a little kid... I've liked to perform," he said. "I enjoy that feeling of coming off the stage and having people clap and cheer. Because I know if they're doing that I made them happy - or sad, as the case may be."

To become a National Honor Thespian, an achievement Wallace predicts he will earn in the next few

months, a high school student needs 1,200 documented hours of participation in drama-related events. This amount of time is equivalent to doing nothing but acting and rehearsing, without breaks or sleep, for two months.

"It's a big deal. It's a huge deal," theater teacher Abbey Fera said. "It means he's had no life," she continued with a laugh.

International Thespian Society is like a national honor society for drama students. A high rank in the association can put someone up for scholarships, and it looks good to potential employers in the acting world. Through her nine years of teaching theater at different schools, Fera said she has seen "maybe one" other student who has put in as many hours as Wallace.

However, Wallace has not always been so ambitious or outgoing. Fera remembers that when she first met him, while he was a seventh grader at Kingwood Middle School, he was much shyer.

"He was very closed off, he didn't like to talk to people," Fera said. "He was a different person."

Both Fera and Wallace agreed that theater was the catalyst that allowed for him to come out of his shell.

"It opened up my personality," Wallace said. "It completely changed my life, my personality, how I acted towards other people, how other people acted towards me."

This also explains his commitment to theater, and the reason why he has accumulated so many hours of participation in high school drama.

"It allowed him to open up, and be who he wanted, and not be judged," Fera said. "I think anytime somebody gets to that freedom, they want to hold onto it."

In his senior year, Wallace's goal is to bring the drama program into a new age. For many years, Kingwood High School has accumulated an impressive amount of prestige in their drama department, often outshining the accomplishments of the KPARK program. Wallace wants to begin to balance this out.

"We're going to be taking a step in a direction to where when people ask about Kingwood theater, about the town theater, people are going to say, 'Which one?' Because they won't know whether they're talking about KPARK or they're talking about KHS," he said.

Other drama students have realized what Wallace is trying to do, and many recognize the value of his leadership, as well as what his achievement of becoming a National Honor Thespian will mean for the program. Junior Zoe Simmons, a friend of Wallace's who has frequently worked with him in various productions, said that when Wallace achieves the rank of National Honor Thespian, it will give the drama program a significant amount of "street cred."

"I think people should understand it really is a huge honor, and he's dedicated so much to this... He definitely deserves this," said Simmons.

Wallace's achievement is what he hopes will start a new trend. What it means to him personally is a demonstration of what is possible, which he believes can allow others after him to follow in his footsteps.

"What being a National Honor Thespian means to me, is the start of something new," Wallace said. "It means that if I can do it, everybody else can. And if everybody else can, this department, this theater, could become great."