



BRIAN FERREIRA/Staff Photographer

Members of the New York group Enact perform "Finding the Words," a play intended to help students come to grips with the effects of last year's terrorist attacks.

# Play helps pupils talk about 9/11

## N.Y. group performs in Middletown

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MIDDLETOWN — Working to encourage teens to express their feelings about the terrorist attacks of one year ago, New York theater troupe Enact aims to help students find the words.

Dozens of area residents poured into the theater of Middletown High School South on Monday night to see "Finding the Words," a play performed by Enact, which visits schools and uses acting to address subjects of conflict.

The performance will be presented again today to select students at Middletown High School South and tomorrow at Middletown High School North.

The text of the production is culled from interviews with students and teachers from the Bronx, Manhattan and Middletown in the aftermath of attacks at the World Trade Center. It focuses on the views of those who narrowly escaped the collapse of the twin towers and of a girl whose father died in the attacks.

The play is "a way to get folks to continue talking in a way that's helpful," said Jeffrey Solomon, the director.

Five Enact actors assume several roles each, slipping from one character to the next with a seemingly effortless change of mannerisms and intonations.

"There is such bravery in these stories," said Diana Feldman, Enact's drama therapist.

One scene involves an interview with "Amy," a Middletown girl whose father was killed.

"I just feel like standing up and saying, 'You can talk about it,' says the character, who must deal with friends who are too embarrassed to be around her following her loss.

"I would rather people be talking about it than just be silent," she says.

Other scenes show characters describing how the attacks changed their lives. Some who never thought of death are now afraid of it; others discover new strengths and gain a new appreciation for life. Teachers struggle to help students cope when they are barely able to cope themselves.

"Finding the Words" is an appropriate title, observed Middletown South's principal, Daniel J. Lane.

"I almost don't know what to

say," Lane explained, referring to his reaction to the attacks. "Sometimes, there is nothing to say."

Those who attended Monday night's performance said they hope the play will help open the lines of communication for those who saw it.

"I'm very moved by this," said Linda Glazebrook, a Middletown resident. "I hope all the kids who see this get the message. Kids have a lot to say about this and they should be heard. They should talk about it because you've got to go through it to get over it."

Jenna Salerno, 17, a Middletown North student who attended the production at Middletown South because she won't be able to attend the production at her school, said the play may encourage students to relate their feelings.

"I think some people think it's kind of embarrassing to talk about it, but maybe now they will," Salerno said, who added that she reflects often on the events of Sept. 11.

"You can't not think about it," she said. "I mean, you see it everywhere you go."