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McDonough County

This Week

Volume 2 Number 6

Published by Eagle Publications of Western Illinois, Inc.
210 S Randolph St., Macomb, Illinois 61455

Coming
This
Week

WEDNESDAY

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Inserts

Local puppeteer is a big kid at heart

By **CHELSEA MCDUGALL**
This Week Editor

As a young child, David Quesal's peers did not understand him. Receiving his first puppet at age 6, he was often seen carrying his Kermit the Frog puppet with him everywhere he went. Instead of accepting his off-beat character or finding humor in his puppets, Quesal's peers often teased and bullied him.

"When I was 6 I got my Kermit the Frog puppet and I carried him around like a favorite teddy bear. He ended up getting very, very worn out," Quesal said.

Rather than turning to friends or family when tormented, Quesal turned



Courtesy Photo
Quesal as a young child with Kermit the Frog.

to his puppets and used them as an escape.

"They were my comrades, especially when I was getting picked on ... I would turn to them," Quesal said. "When my

peers or human friends would pick on me for it, I would retreat to them."

Rather than turning his back on his stuffed friends when teased about them, Quesal continued to refine his skills as a puppet master.

Now 20 years old and a theatre major at WIU, Quesal's love for puppetry is more than just a hobby.

Professionally, he has landed several gigs performing puppet shows for area children at

Chamber of Commerce events. Now, in conjunction with The Magic Dragon, he performs his puppet show at birthday parties while continuing to do any event he is asked.

"The kids have always enjoyed him," The Magic Dragon owner Noelle Flynn said. "He's very animated."

His early shows earned him enough money in tips to buy his puppets, which can be expensive.

With Jim Henson as his mentor and The Muppets as his guide, Quesal is incorporating tricks he learned from the famous puppets into his own act.

"As long as I can remember I'd always watch something Muppet-related," he said. Adding he would mimic what he saw on The Muppets with his own toys and puppets as a child. With the help of his eight lovable characters, Quesal creates a show that has audiences rolling in laughter.

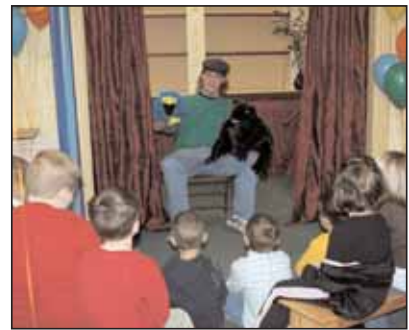


Photo by Chelsea McDougall

Quesal performs a puppet show for a birthday party at The Magic Dragon, Macomb.

Rather than being behind a curtain or ledge and unseen, Quesal sits on a chair. Although audiences can see him, that never distracts from his performance.

"I saw an interview with Jim Henson once and he was saying a lot of people worry if they see a performer in the same shot as the puppet, but it was his experience that it's the characters that were more interesting," he said. "It's my opinion that the kids and the parents are more interested in looking at the characters than (me)."

Quesal truly believes puppetry is more than just a job or hobby - for him it's an art form. And bringing these inanimate objects to life is no easy task. He has to make his hands move together and create different voices for each character. On top of that, he must make sure

he has the same voice for the character.

Using computer software, Quesal, with a self-described good voice, re-records popular Muppets songs with his voice and sometimes new words. He has about seven songs he uses for shows.

Performing various several-minute long shows, Quesal never turns his characters to violence. He said it is the conflicts he had as a child that make him stray from that.

"I let the conflicts that my characters have in the puppet shows be non-confrontational," he said.

Quesal is a 2005 Macomb High graduate and is the son of Robert and Donna Quesal. For more information or to book Quesal for a show, call The Magic Dragon, at 309-837-1105 for his contact information.



Photo by Chelsea McDougall

David Quesal, 20, pictured with Bernie the Bird and Drago the Dragon.

Area parents learn about Internet dangers

By **CHELSEA MCDUGALL**
This Week Editor

"I had a 26-year-old friend on MySpace that started to get mad when I was not on or when he wanted me to be. He started talking about sexual things." "Someone added me and he/she was calling me bad names and threatening to kill me." "One girl who I thought was 11 turned out to be a 36-year-old man and tried to call me."

These are some of the exact comments said by Macomb Junior and Senior High School students in an anonymous survey given to students. The results were presented at an Internet safety educational session. The event called

"Don't Get Caught in the Net ... Do You Know Where Your Children Are?" was held Wednesday, Jan. 31 and was sponsored by the Macomb Online Safety Team (MOST), the Regional Office of Education, Macomb CUSD #185 and Infobahn Outfitters. Each organization presented a variety of information. Mayor Mick Wisslead declared Jan. 31 Internet Safety Day by giving a proverbial proclamation.

According to Detective Matt Gass from the Macomb Police Department, Internet safety issues often seen in the news do not only happen in big cities. He presented three cases involving Internet crimes in Macomb's backyard. Fortunately, he said,



Photo by Chelsea McDougall

Macomb Police Detective Matt Gass presented "In Your Neighborhood" that highlighted three local Internet crimes at an educational Internet safety course for parents.

no one was seriously harmed. Two cases involved sting operations

with police officials acting as a child. The other case involved a 14-year-

old girl from Macomb who traveled to Orlando via train with an older man she met online. The girl was returned unharmed.

"I just showed this can happen in our community," Gass said at the end of his presentation. "Luckily nothing happened to our juveniles."

Jace Galloway-Shoemaker presented a series of videos about Internet safety on topics like cyber bullying, or intimidating, threatening, embarrassing someone by way of cyber communication, cyber stalking, chat room safety and child pornography.

When a child is chatting online, the videos

See Internet

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