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IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Children inspire pops to perform

By CAROL HOPKINS
Of The Oakland Press

Last year, Shawn Ryskamp was at a parade with his friend Tagg Smith and their families when the two men — both musicians and singers — began brainstorming.

“We were thinking about maybe making a silly kids songs CD,” said Ryskamp, a 38-year-old Orion Township resident with five children.

Smith, the father of two children who could play piano and guitar, knew Ryskamp could sing since he’d heard him in church for years.

They wondered what it might be like to put on shows together.

“You know, just two dads who knew what it was like to have kids,” said Ryskamp.

The result has turned out to be “Zippity2Dad,” a production company where Ryskamp and Smith promise to handle everything from school assemblies to wedding entertainment.

After the initial discussion, Ryskamp, who has performed and entertained for years, spent weekends and lunch breaks writing the company’s first show, “Character Performance: Preparing Children for the Biggest Stage of All — Life.”

In the one-hour show geared for students in kindergarten through fifth grade, the two



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Tagg Smith, Bingo the Bear and Shawn Ryskamp are Zippity2Dad Productions.

dads use drama and music to explain the importance of character traits such as trustworthiness and fairness.

“During the show, we act and play instruments,” said Ryskamp. “We want to relate that we’re performers. Then we stress that kids, too, perform every day and how they perform is important.”

The men also have a 45-minute show on the environment that takes students on an adventure with wasteful “Earthenazer Skrooge,” a man, the pair reports, who desperately needs to learn about caring for the planet.

Smith, a Waterford

Township resident, grew up playing piano and acting in community theater. On stage, he’s busy playing instruments or making balloon animals.

“I’m the straight man,” says the 34-year-old Smith, with a chuckle. “Shawn is the funny man.”

Smith’s background in computers has proved helpful, Ryskamp noted. “He did the Web site for us. Also our show involves sound cues and he puts that into a program so we can get what we need at the touch of a button.”

Ryskamp — who used to tour as a costumed character in a professional children’s show — is also making use of a Bingo the Bear costume he had tucked in his closet. Bingo takes center stage during birthday shows and singing “Birthday-Grans.”

The dads also will provide music and vocals for weddings, corporate events or parties.

Although the company has only just begun, the two friends appear excited about its prospects.

Ryskamp has already booked some assemblies and Bingo recently entertained at a teen’s 16th birthday.

Ryskamp explained, “I just love performing drama, and singing. Tagg likes to perform, too, but he’s more the instrumentalist.

“That’s why we fit together well. We both have our strengths.”

For more information

Zippity2Dad Productions can be booked to stage assemblies for children, and for parties. The company can also provide vocalists and pianists for weddings, retirement parties or corporate events. Visit www.zippity2dad.com or call (248) 252-4747.