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## Local News

Wednesday, June 7, 2006; Posted: 11:15 a.m. EDT

# These kids are encouraged to Act Up

BY CHUCK GIBSON | COMMUNITY PRESS CONTRIBUTOR

MASON -- "Acting Up" is a new community theater group, that, like the ugly duckling featured in its current production "Honk Jr.," is different.

It's different because it is committed to kids and will have no adult productions.

ADVERTISEMENT Based in Mason, the group draws kids come from all over the area. The organization's first production was the "Wizard of Oz" and it had more than 170 kids show up.

"The first show we went with 'Wizard of Oz,'" director Brent Peebles said. "We ended up drawing kids we'd never seen before."

The kids come from 27 different schools in Mason, Loveland, Sycamore, Kings, Lebanon, Lakota, Morrow and other public and private schools locally. Some children are even privately home schooled.

Everyone in the group is excited about what makes them different.

The first show included parent volunteers using their talents to create great special



ZOOM

The cast and crew for Acting Up's production of "Honk Jr."

### ABOUT THE SHOW

Title: "Honk Jr."

Performance times: 7 p.m. Friday, June 9; 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday, June 10; 1 p.m. Sunday, June 11. The Saturday matinee will also include a sign language interpreter for the hearing impaired.



effects, set design and painting, costume, make-up, and a tornado and disappearing witch effects.

"Every rehearsal starts with an acting exercise," Peebles explained, citing another difference.

"We use acting games for fun and teaching."

No. 1 on the list of goals for every production is to be sure the kids just have a good time and learn.

Yes, they still strive to put on a good show for the audience, but it comes second to fun and learning in this unique approach to community theater for kids.

They still select shows that appeal to the audience and the actors -- the same as any theater group.

They chose the current production "Honk Jr." because it sends a message that it's OK to be different.

The show is based on the Hans Christian Anderson tale of the "Ugly Duckling."

Though this production includes 48 actors, stage crew, props, lighting, and all the behind-the-scenes work will be done by kids too.

The kids range in age from 5-17 years old and include a Cappie winner from Sycamore High School.

Cappies is an international organization for high school theatrical performance which is the equivalent of the Tony awards for professional stage productions. Laura Friedmann, 16, of Sycamore won the award for her funny delivery in a supporting role during a Sycamore High School production.

Where: Mason Middle School Auditorium.

Tickets: \$8 for adults and children and \$6 for seniors.

For more information: [www.actinguonline.org](http://www.actinguonline.org)

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ZOOM

Sycamore High School student Laura Friedmann displays her Cappie award. She is part of the new children's theater group, Acting Up.

"It's more fun," Friedman said about "Acting Up". "Because I really enjoy working with the little kids."

Kids helping kids also makes this group very unique. Like Katie Pilone, 12, who is studying ballet and has been accepted to the exclusive Boston Ballet for five weeks this summer, she's helping teach the other dancers in the show.

"It's community theater in the best sense of the word with communities coming together," Peebles said.

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