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Last Updated: 11:38 am | Tuesday, April 22, 2008

Stage a 'Wonderland' for young Loveland actors

 BY CHUCK GIBSON | LOVELAND@COMMUNITYPRESS.COM

Several Loveland area kids will perform in an Acting Up production of Disney's "Alice in Wonderland Jr." May 2-4 at the Mason High School Theater.

Acting Up is the Mason based all volunteer community theater group dedicated to serving young actors ages 5-18.

"We are centered in Mason, but we really do draw a lot of kids from all over Cincinnati," said Brent Peebles, Acting Up president and director of "Alice in Wonderland Jr."

"Loveland is definitely a big area for us."

Peebles is a familiar face in the Loveland community, having played the role of Pawnee Bill in the Loveland Stage Company's production of "Annie Get Your Gun." He's very excited about directing the 10 Loveland youth as part of a cast of 80 kids in the show that inspired his own interest in theater when he was a kid.

"We have a lot of talented people who have come our way," Peebles said. "I knew what kind of talent we had. Fortunately, I've been able to leverage it into all kinds of goodies."

The Loveland talent pool includes Timmy Hansen, a second-grader at Loveland Primary School, performing in his first show with Acting Up. For one night last Christmas, he played a street boy in "A Christmas Carol" at Playhouse in the Park.

"When I did Playhouse in the Park, I didn't do much," Hansen said. "In this play I do more. I sing a lot. I really like the caucus race in the play."

He's part of the ensemble cast which includes Emily Ogden, Elise Ogden and Lauren Kiley from Loveland.

Kiley is a veteran of Loveland Stage Company, but this is her first experience with Acting Up. She likes meeting new people from different places and said people should come because "it's going to be a really good show."

"My favorite part is the song 'Golden Afternoon,'" the 11-year-old said. "It's when the flowers come out and they are pop stars in the play and everyone wants to be like them. They are celebrities."

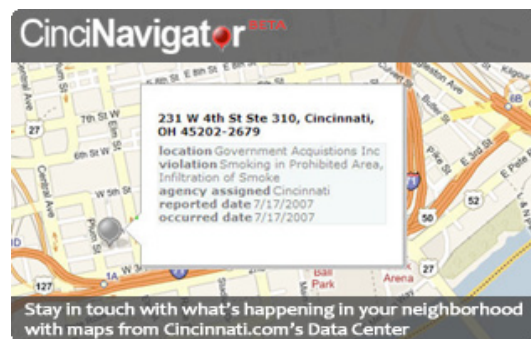
With a cast of 80, the challenge for Peebles is to give each kid a special moment on stage. Many of the Loveland youth have character roles in the large cast show.

Abby Docherty is one of the two Rock Lobsters, has a song to sing and will perform a magic effect on stage. Reagan Johnson plays the role of the 3 of Diamonds, has solos and sings parts in the "Painting the Roses Red" song.

"I'm very fortunate to have Kirsten Johnson in this show," Peebles said. "It's very hard to match one kid with another. She's just fantastic as Tweedle Dum. The Tweedle Dum/Tweedle Dee scene is very funny in this show. She's got great energy."

Beau Cybulski plays a docile husband to the Queen of Hearts as the King of Hearts. Later, he is transformed as the prosecutor in the trial scene where he sort of runs the show and has a lot of fun on stage.

The Cheshire Cat, played by Katie Paddock, serves as narrator and is part of a lot of the magic in

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CHUCK GIBSON/CONTRIBUTOR

Timmy Hansen (red shirt) rehearses; Katherine DeGroft is in the green.

Acting Up's 'Alice in Wonderland'

Where: Mason High School Theater

Dates: May 2-4

Showtimes: Friday, 7 p.m.; Saturday, 2 p.m. (sign language interpreter provided) and 7 p.m.; Sunday, 2 p.m.

Tickets: \$10 each (\$8 for seniors and groups)

Available: On line at www.actingup.com or at the box office.

For more information call 513-588-0988 or

the show.

Samantha Baker rounds out the Loveland cast in her third show with the Mason group.

"I'm a snotty flower in Wonderland," said Baker, who just finished performing in "Oklahoma" as a senior at Loveland High School. "Alice wants to be just like us."

This is the sixth production for Acting Up. Besides teaching the production process to the students, they try to give back to the community. Several cast members will perform at Brookside, an extended care facility in Mason.

"The show is good," Kiley said. "I want them to see how good they made it."

www.ActingUp.com



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The Loveland actors are, from left: front row, Elise Ogden, Timmy Hansen, Lauren Kiley and Abby Docherty; back row, Emily Ogden, Katie Paddock, Kirsten Johnson, Reagan Johnson, Samantha Baker and Beau Cybulski.

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Director Brent Peebles with actors behind him during rehearsal for the show.



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Kirsten Johnson (Tweedle Dum), Emily Kissela (Alice) and Allie Cousineau (Tweedle Dee).



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Katie Paddock and Hannah Pelfrey rehearse their roles.

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