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*Erin Nelson & Jennifer Pryor,
student storytellers
photos by Chris Johnson*



tales or anecdotes using words, images and sounds. Stories have often been used not only to entertain but also to teach or explain. Stories have been shared in every culture and in every land from generation to generation as a means of preserving culture and instilling values, morals and knowledge. Each story includes a plot, characters and a narrative point of view. Nowadays, storytelling can be used for therapy and to help public speakers improve their presentation. In formal storytelling, such as at a festival, the storyteller will go to great lengths to prepare his story for an audience. These stories can come from the storyteller's own imagination or may be a story adapted from a book.

Let Me Tell You a Story

By Wendy Crooks

EVERY STORY has a beginning and the tale of the Frisco Storytelling Festival is no different. In 2003, Shelley Holley traveled west to Timpanogos, Utah. It was there she sat at the foot of Mt. Timpanagos and watched more than 20,000 people enjoy the ancient art of storytelling. Originally the city of Orem, Utah used their storytelling festival as a fundraiser to build their beautiful new public library. Now that the library has been built, the proceeds from the festival are used each year to purchase new books, promote storytelling awareness and build an endowment to ensure the continuation of the festival. As the Public Service Coordinator for the Frisco Public Library, Ms. Holley was most enthralled with what she witnessed at that storytelling festival. She carefully digested the events at the festival and watched like “a fly on a wall.” Ms. Holley recalled, “I was really excited about what I saw and knew we needed to have this in Frisco.”

The 2007 Frisco Storytelling Festival will be held the weekend of October 12th and

13th and Frisco Square will come alive with fun and festivities. During the day there will be artisans demonstrating their crafts. Some to be included are a potter's wheel and full-sized looms for weaving. Several of the artisans will even let the audience take their turn at their craft. Visitors will delight in demonstrations of a carousel horse wood carver, stained glass, paper marbling, quilting and candy making in addition to puppet shows, music, crafts, folklore and more. On Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. the festivities will be free thanks to the generosity of corporate sponsor, Target. There will be two nights of evening concerts, some more appropriate for younger children than the others. “Bedtime Stories” is an early evening show that is perfect for the younger ones – or even those who are just young at heart! Some younger children might find it difficult to sit still and quiet for the longer, later shows.

WHAT IS STORYTELLING?

Storytelling is the ancient art of conveying

...Ms. Holley immediately got to work. Within one short year, Frisco enjoyed their own wonderful Storytelling Festival.

AND SO THE STORY BEGINS

After returning home from her trip, Ms. Holley immediately got to work. Within one short year, Frisco enjoyed their own wonderful Storytelling Festival in the fall of 2004. In that inaugural year, Frisco was recognized by the national storytellers themselves as the “Best 1st Year” for storytelling festivals. So they were off to a great start!

The festival was designed to have local students participate as well as feature the more experienced professional storytellers. The first year eight students applied to participate. The next year 15 or 16 applied. Now, in just the fourth year of the festival's existence, 59 students tried out between March and May.



LIFE AS A STORYTELLER

For students to participate in the Frisco Festival, they must submit a videotape or DVD of themselves telling a story for consideration. A panel of librarians view all the submissions and select the students that will participate in the storytelling festival. According to Mayra Diaz, who helps train the chosen storytellers, "The judges are looking for raw talent that can be developed. They pay special attention to the storyteller's articulation, gestures, inflection, voice, mannerisms and general ease of telling the story."

Once selected, the storytellers must sign a contract that commits them to a minimum of five one-hour training workshops. They must also practice, practice, practice.

Although it takes great work and dedication from the students, there are many rewards for being a storyteller. From gaining confidence as a public speaker to learning how to make mistakes and move on, these storytellers are learning great life skills.

LOCAL STORYTELLERS:

JENNIFER PRYOR

The Pryor family has more than one storytelling star in the family. Jennifer's big sister, Allison, now 13, performed at the Frisco Storytelling Festival for the previous two years. After watching her big sister perform, Jennifer, from Sem Elementary School, decided it might be fun to be a storyteller herself. As a 3rd grader, she competed and won a spot last year to perform on stage. She enjoyed being a storyteller so much she decided to come back and try again this year.

Jennifer admits that finding the perfect story can be very difficult. "It's hard because you know you have to pick out something that you know you won't get bored with." Jennifer certainly needs to be interested in her story since she usually practices it two or three times each day. Even after all the practice, mistakes can still happen. Sometimes Jennifer practices her story in front of her neighbor because, as she says, "I can mess up and she won't care." According to storytelling coach Mayra Diaz, "That's all part of it too. It's important for them to learn to move on

when they make mistakes so the audience is unaware a mistake was even made.”

When speaking in front of a large group, many people follow the old cliché of imagining the audience in their underwear. Jennifer hasn’t had to do that. She simply imagines the audience is a group of her friends.

Her sister, Allison, decided to take a break this year but look for the continuation of the Pryor family next year as Allison and Jennifer both plan to return for their final year of eligibility at the festival.

ERIN NELSON

A veteran to the Frisco Storytelling Festival is 11-year-old Erin Nelson. This year is Erin’s third and final year performing at the Frisco Festival but certainly not her last venue. According to Erin, “Storytelling is my hobby and I love it. I will take my break because I have to but I will be back.” Frisco Storytelling Festival limits participants to three years so others will have the same opportunity. Erin’s favorite part is choosing stories that are funny and make people laugh.

Although Erin’s parents never tire of her stories, her older sister prefers she expand her practice audience. Taking her sister’s advice, Erin had the opportunity to tell a story to the kindergarteners at her former elementary school. “They laughed,” she said. “It’s really nice to know that they like the stories and think they’re funny.”

MEGAN HOPE

Also participating in the festival is Fowler Middle School’s 6th grader, Megan Hope. Last year Megan’s principal told the students about the festival and said he strongly recommended any student who liked to read try out. This is Megan’s second time to participate and she has big plans to continue. “I love storytelling so much that I plan to do it again even after the three years that you’re allowed. I will have to take a break but I will come back after that.” said Megan.

Megan also practices quite frequently. She practices in front of a mirror to help with her expressions. She said that the hardest part is the beginning. “Every time I tell my story I get stage fright, but then I

calm down and really tell the story.”

A STORYTELLING STAR

While all of these committed students are stars, one has gone on to receive recognition at the national level. An 8th grader at Wester Middle School, Keith Kibby, has been telling stories on stage for four years. But Keith admitted, “I’ve actually been telling stories since I was three.”

After his third year performing at the Frisco Storytelling Festival, Keith attended the Tejas Storytelling Festival in Denton, Texas. In a storytelling competition, Keith won first place in his age division. From there, five storytellers were selected from Texas to send their storytelling tapes to Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. Of those five, only two were selected to move on and Keith was one of those two. He traveled to Pigeon Forge where he competed against 20 other kids from around the United States in the National Youth Storytelling Showcase. Keith was delighted to be surrounded by his storytelling peers. Besides getting to participate in this great competition, he loved just being a part

of the entire experience. “One of my favorite things was when we stayed up till 1 or 2 in the morning playing storytelling games in the lobby of the hotel where we stayed.”

This year in Jonesborough, Tennessee, Keith will participate in the National Storytelling Festival. Only six students were selected nationwide to tell five stories.

The one thing Keith finds challenging is selecting his story. “It’s always hard to find the perfect story.” He said, “Every year you think you’ve told your best story and each year you find something else that excites you.”

NATIONAL STORYTELLERS

Again this year we are fortunate to have talented national storytellers come to the Frisco Storytelling Festival!

DOUG LIPMAN

Doug Lipman’s more than 25-year career as a professional storyteller has taken him all over the United States, Canada and New Zealand. He has performed at schools, libraries, synagogues, universities, National Public Radio, the National Storytelling Festival and even the Smithsonian Museum. Mr. Lipman accompanies his stories with song as well as plays the flute, banjo, guitar and accordion.

DAVID NOVAK

Another featured storyteller at the Frisco Storytelling Festival is David Novak. With a background in theatre arts including Shakespeare, clowning, creative dramatics, playwriting and directing, Mr. Novak is back to delight audiences once again. He has performed at numerous festivals including the Timpanogos Festival, Tejas Festival and the Hawaiian Talking Island Festival. Mr. Novak always manages to delight his audience with his many characters as well as by transforming ordinary objects into magical props.

BOBBY NORFOLK

Bobby Norfolk began with a career in comedy and acting. When his son was only three, he began reading normal bedtime stories that he ultimately turned into his own interpretations. These theatrical performances surprised both of them. Later he realized his background

might really lend itself to a career in storytelling. In 1987 he became a full-time storyteller. Mr. Norfolk comes to Frisco with a plethora of experience having been on television and performed at festivals, museums, universities, schools, libraries, concerts, theatres and more.

BETH HORNER

Critics have called her performance, “Dynamite!” Beth Horner, a nationally acclaimed storyteller, will also be a featured storyteller at the Frisco Storytelling Festival. Ms. Horner, who has been telling stories professionally for more than 19 years, entertains audiences with her unique and lively

performance. Her goal as a storyteller is to have the members of her audience bring their imaginations to the forefront and experience her stories through their own vivid images.

Storytelling is not just for kids anymore. Check out the weekend activities by supporting a local student teller or for the enjoyment of an entertaining evening under the stars. The Festival will be held in City Hall Plaza in front of the George A. Purefoy Municipal Center. For more information on this exciting Festival, visit their website at www.friscofest.org.

Wendy Crooks is a freelance writer living in Plano.

FRISCO STORYTELLING FESTIVAL SCHEDULE OF EVENTS		
Friday Evening, October 12		
7:30	Pre-show Music provided by Dove Creek Music (inside Library/City Hall)	
8:00	Favorite Stories (inside Library/City Hall) Performing: Doug Lipman, Beth Horner, Bobby Norfolk & David Novak.	
Saturday, October 13 : Puppet Shows on each hour Folk Arts & Crafts demonstrations throughout the day *Indicates student storytellers		
	<u>Tent #1</u>	<u>Tent #2</u>
10:00-11:00	Abby Travis* Alex Alford* Tionne Fuller* Beth Horner	Baylee Henderixson* Divya Govil* Thomas Elledge* Doug Lipman
11:30-12:30	Emily Geringer* Erin Nelson* Bobby Norfolk	Jennifer Pryor* Jonah Soble* David Novak
1:00-2:00	Jordan Sanchez* Katie Ellis* Doug Lipman	Kaylee VanStory* Lauren Wood* Thomas Friend* Beth Horner
2:30- 3:30	Maddie Briggs* Mckenzie Jackson* David Novak	Meena Subramanian* Megan Hope* Bobby Norfolk
Saturday Evening (Tent #1)		
6:00	Bedtime Stories Performing: David Novak, Doug Lipman, Bobby Norfolk & Beth Horner.	
7:30	Pre-show Music provided by The Johnson Brother’s Band	
8:00	Laughing Night Performing - Beth Horner, Doug Lipman, David Novak, & Bobby Norfolk.	