



WHO LOVES YA, BABY!: James Putnam, center, indicates who rules in the WAC. Click the Arts&Life index for a link to photos of a triumph deluxe in Reno. / Photo by Patrick Oden

Today's word on
journalism

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Nibley keeps community theater tradition alive



HALT! Kids play cops in the Nibley Children's Theate production of Pirates of Penzance. / Photo courtesy of Bonnie Schenk-Darrington

By [Candice Mattson](#)

February 16, 2009 | NIBLEY -- Every summer, hundreds of children from Nibley are busy donning costumes, memorizing lines and singing songs. They are preparing for the annual children's play performed during the Nibley Heritage Days celebration.

What they take part in is something quite unique; a play mostly performed by children. The Nibley Children's Theatre is a volunteer-based theater company founded in 1983 by Jessie Datwyler. Datwyler, a resident of Nibley at the time, directed the plays for over 20 years until 2005 when she moved to Smithfield.

Since then, a few different people have taken turns running the company. The current director is Bonnie Schenk-Darrington.

Over the years, the play has been performed at the Old City Park at 325 W. 3200 South. The company first started out by renting a stage from Hyrum. Eventually, Nibley city built an amphitheater where the play is performed. Schenk-Darrington said a backdrop was added in 2007 and plays get better and more professional each year.

The Nibley Children's Theatre has a fairly strict budget; with \$1,500 being their limit, Schenk-Darrington and others volunteer hundreds of hours to keep costs low.

Although some children audition for the play, many can sign up without auditioning. Schenk-Darrington said the company tries to stick to fairy tales and classics because copyrights can be costly.

"The point is to get them on stage and let them be the star for a moment," said Schenk-Darrington. She mentioned that 142 children and 51 adult volunteers were involved in last year's production of "Pirates of Penzance." The number of children involved in the company's first production was 20, with five adults, and the number has increased every year. Volunteers sign up to sew costumes and each child involved is usually asked to provide a few basic items that can help with wardrobes, such as white shirts and tights.

Schenk-Darrington has volunteered in these children's plays for quite a few years now. She said she became involved as a child and was on and off throughout the years. In 2007, she was assistant director to Sandra Larkin and eventually took over position as director a year later.

Schenk-Darrington said although at times it can be stressful, it is "very gratifying" to her. Growing up as a child, she said there were fewer ways that children could express themselves and be involved. Once she became a part of the plays, she said she found where she belonged.

"It gave me self-confidence," she said. "I wasn't afraid to get up on stage." While others seemed to be excelling at other activities such as sports, Schenk-Darrington said that being in theater helped her to realize her talents. She also added that some adults that are currently volunteering were in the plays when they were younger. She said there is always "a lot of reminiscing" about their experiences in the performances as children.

"I'm hoping to give kids these memories," she said, adding that she has noticed a change in her own daughter's self-confidence from being involved. Being involved in the play "jump-started creativity" for her child.

"I think it still makes a difference in their lives," she said. "It gives kids a home."

This year's performance will be "The Goose Girls" by the Brothers Grimm and it is scheduled to appear on June 18 and 19 at the Old City Park on 325 W. 3200 South.

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