



Scott Ertl:

Making **MAGIC** ON and OFF the Stage

By Dawson Cooper

Scott Ertl, local magician and school counselor, is busy making magic – not only at summer magic camps, but also in the lives of children and parents across the Winston-Salem area.

As a child, Ertl loved magic and at age 15 had his first show. “I was stunned that someone would pay me to do what I loved,” Ertl remembers. From this early love of magic and tricks, Ertl began working with the circus during his college summers.

He recalls preparing for his juggling act when circus-goers would come up and watch him. “Here, you want to try it?” Ertl once asked a young girl. “All you have to do is think positive,” he continued. “Well, I’m positive that I can’t juggle,” the girl quickly replied. From those first interactions to large group discussions in which everyone was juggling, Ertl discovered the power of activity and humor to bring a group together.

After 11 years, Ertl says that he “ran away from the circus to join school.” As an elementary school counselor, Ertl still uses humor to connect with the students and for the students to connect with one another. Through his Playshops and Parent-Child Retreats, Ertl constantly uses both physical activities and humor to help participants form long-lasting bonds.

As founder and trainer of Playshops, Ertl has reached out to both children and parents alike. In addition to his “day job” at Marvin Ward Elementary School, where Ertl works in the counseling department and is sponsor of the Chess Club, he coordinates and executes these Playshops for schools and organizations across the country.

Playshops are designed to “build and strengthen relationships through playing and talking together” at school. Author of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, Jack Canfield says, “What a fun way to help any school transform a community! Playshops help us remember how much more alike we are than different.”

In addition to Playshops, Ertl coordinates and leads Parent-Child

Retreats that are “fun and playful opportunities that create relaxing and meaningful moments through special one-on-one exercises and discussions.” Through encouraging discussion in calm and rational mindsets Ertl says parents and children can be productive and come up with positive solutions to everyday struggles.

Aside from school, Playshops, and Retreats, Ertl’s other love is magic. The power of the phrase, “Do you want to see a trick?” has worked magic in the lives of countless children Ertl says. Magic, just like humor, can be used to reach out to others. Ertl has witnessed this power as shy, introverted children suddenly have something to show others and energetic, extroverted children suddenly have a positive activity to channel their energy into.

One student whose life was touched by Ertl and magic, is Brandon Noffle, who performs weekly at a local Moe’s Restaurant. Noffle began his career in magic by attending Ertl’s Fun Magic Camp in the summer. Brandon’s mother touts Ertl as “one of the best she has ever seen working with children,” and says that she believes that “magic helps anyone because of the mental and physical dexterity needed—it’s great for anyone to learn.” Noffle, a high school senior, also performs magic at the Moe’s Southwest Grill at Thruway Shopping Center on Mondays.

The magic camps, which are held three different weeks in the summer, focus on teaching campers not only “tricks of the trade” but also how to perform magic in an entertaining fashion. Available for ages eight to 16, the magic camps are a great opportunity for students to learn something new or perhaps hone old skills during the summertime.

Ertl, who says that if he won a million dollars would still continue doing what he does now, doesn’t show any signs of slowing down – and neither does his passion for forming and improving relationships. From a desire to entertain and a talent to perform magic, Ertl has reached out to children and families across the country, both overtly and inadvertently. Whether he himself has taught a parent and child how best to communicate, showed two coworkers how to relate to one another, or showed a young teenage boy how to entertain and amaze with a magic trick, Ertl’s influence and effectiveness is truly...magical.

For more information about the Fun Magic Camps or how to sign up for them, check out: www.funmagiccamp.com. For more information about the Playshops check out: www.playshops.com