

# Drama group puts kids' self-esteem center stage with talent

By JAN HOGAN

VIEW STAFF WRITER

This month, Las Vegas Valley residents have a chance to watch kindergarten through fifth-graders perform in two plays by the developmental program Drama Kids.

“Pirates Beware” is set for 4:30 and 5:30 p.m. May 14, 5:30 p.m. May 19, 5:30 and 6:30 p.m. May 21 and 7:30 p.m. May 22 at the Summerlin Library Performing Arts Center, 1771 Inner Circle Drive.

“Mystery Under the Big Top” is set for various times through May 29 at the center.

The program holds no auditions and denies no child. It focuses on speech and drama through literacy enrichment and aspires to give children better public speaking skills and confidence in social settings. It is referred to as “acting up with a purpose” in weekly after-school classes and summer camps.

Drama Kids is in 24 countries. The Las Vegas franchise opened in 2008 and engages youths in grades K-5 from 23 different schools. There are also programs for those new to acting and more experienced young people. The children perform for their family and friends in one of two plays at a the-

ater-type venue. “Pirates Beware” is for the younger ages, and “Mystery Under the Big Top” is for the older kids. The plays are original and copyrighted just for Drama Kids International franchise use.

“We’re not a production or performance company. We like to say we build confidence, not shows,” said Tina Nowak, owner and director of the local franchise. “So it’s public speaking skills, teamwork, how to be part of an ensemble and build trust within that group and taking risks.”

Those goals are not lost on the youths. Lucia, 11, said she wanted to be involved in Drama Kids because she likes acting and “hanging out with people. I learned how to be a better person and how to get along with other people.”

View visited the final week of after-school rehearsals held in two classrooms at Staton Elementary School, 1700 Sageberry Drive.

In the first classroom, younger children stood in a half-circle, facing Kyle Nowak, Tina’s son and an instructor in training, who ran through the lines with them, a fast-paced effort that had him pointing and snapping his fingers whenever a line was to be recited.

He was later joined by instructor Christine Koehle, whose passion for drama in-

cluded demonstrating the big expressions, the over-the-top examples of how to deliver a line. The children caught on to Koehle’s enthusiasm; as they recited lines, their interpretations were suddenly magnified.

In the other classroom, the older children were divided into two groups, one on each half of the room. The two would alternate performing “Mystery Under the Big Top,” so everyone got a chance to shine. Tina Nowak held court at the front of the room, pointing whenever a line needed to be delivered. Her instruction included exaggerated examples of how to deliver a line or how to use the body to visually convey being dragged off stage.

One time, when she glanced down at the script on the floor to find her place, Nowak muttered, “OK, and then we’re going to have —”

“Cookies?” one of the children suggested. When things got a little silly — and the plays’ premises certainly invited silliness — the instructor would thump on a tambourine, and silence immediately ensued. The entire hour was spent in rehearsal, with not a moment wasted.

“If you forget your line, don’t worry,” Nowak told them. “Are we about being per-



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**Instructor Christine Koehle, left, and instructor in training Kyle Nowak get expressive as they discuss how to deliver lines April 29 during an after-school rehearsal at Staton Elementary School.**

fect? No. We’re about having fun.”

Tickets are free but limited. For show time information or to request tickets, call 702-870-4354, ext. 1, or email [lvdramakids@gmail.com](mailto:lvdramakids@gmail.com).

For more information about Drama Kids, visit [dramakids.com](http://dramakids.com).

To reach Summerlin Area View reporter Jan Hogan, email [jhogan@viewnews.com](mailto:jhogan@viewnews.com) or call 702-387-2949.