



SHARING HER PASSION

Myers brings out best in young performers

BY HOLLY LA PAT / SPECIAL TO THE DAILY PRESS

EDITOR'S NOTE: To celebrate Women's History Month, the Daily Press is honoring inspiring women of the Victor Valley. Wolf Whistle Salon and Day Spa in Apple Valley provided free hairstyling and makeup for each photo session. The women were nominated by Daily Press readers. This is the fifth article in the series.

APPLE VALLEY • Whether she's directing second-graders to be mushrooms or sixth-graders to play Ebenezer Scrooge, Melanie Myers of Apple Valley is right at home.

"They come off (the stage) with smiles on their faces and that is so rewarding," Myers said.

In the past year, Myers has staged two plays — on a volunteer basis — with elementary school students from Apple Valley's Academy for Academic Excellence. Because of her ability to bring out the most in these young performers, Myers has been nominated as one of the Daily Press' 2013 Most Inspiring Women.

"The kids did fantastic, and really it was the kids," Myers said. "It wasn't me. The talent they had — they just ran with it. That was just awesome."

Myers works with scripts that are designed to let several actors take turns playing one role. Her production of "Alice in Wonderland" featured five Alices; "A Christmas Carol" had six young actors playing Scrooge. The result is entertaining for the audience and enjoyable for the students as well.

"I was able to show them that if you want to do it, get out there and do it," Myers said. "Don't let anybody make you afraid."

Because of good ticket sales and Myers' thriftiness with sets and props, her last show even turned a profit.

"('A Christmas Carol') ended up making the school money, which is cool," she said.

In an era when fewer schools offer music and theater classes, Myers wants to give children a chance to experience the joy of performing.

"I don't do this for money," Myers said. "I do this because I never got to do drama in elementary school."

Myers remembers being very shy as a little girl.

"I was that kid that cried at everything," she said. "Even at my birthday party when they sang 'Happy Birthday' to me, I sat there and cried."

That changed when she started taking drama in junior high.

"It opened up something inside me that I never knew was there," she said.

Her passion for acting grew when she went on to Apple Valley High School, where Renee Freeman was her drama teacher for all four years. Freeman, Myers says, "totally inspired" her.

“She taught me it’s not just get up there and pretend,” she said. “You have to put some thought into it.”

Freeman remembers Myers, too.

“She was always a kind girl, always generous with others,” Freeman said. “It was never all about her. It was about the ensemble. She always wanted what was good for the whole.”

Currently, Myers co-teaches musical theater with Darlene Velasquez at A Dancer’s Pointe in Apple Valley. Together, they’re directing a full length musical spoof called “Lucky Dollar, Private Eye,” which will be performed locally in August. The cast ranges in age from 6 to 14 years old.

“She’s very laid-back and funny,” Velasquez said of Myers. “We work well together.”



HAIR: Victoria Levotch MAKEUP: Teri Blackwell

JAMES QUIGG, DAILY PRESS

DIRECTS CHILDRENS’ PLAYS: Melanie Myers, of Apple Valley, directs childrens’ plays for the Academy of Academic Excellence.

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