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Listen to the Normal Storyteller

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Issue date: 10/4/07 Section: Features

Media Credit: Alex Reside

Dr. Michael Lockett, The Normal Storyteller, is a keynote speaker and wants to promote storytelling in schools.

When the term ‘storyteller’ is heard, many people automatically picture a children’s librarian reading a book to an audience of juveniles. While this stereotype may be correct on occasion, it does not hold true for “The Normal Storyteller,” one of the national faces of storytelling who hails from the Bloomington-Normal area.

Dr. Mike Lockett, a retired elementary school teacher and administrator, has dedicated his time and energy into the art of storytelling. His tale-telling resume includes three award winning CDs, multiple invitations to several different conventions, states, and countries, as well as more than 200 unique stories in his repertoire.

While he has received a considerable amount of fame because of his storytelling career, his reasoning for his new profession has never wavered.

“My goal as a storyteller is to preserve stories and share them with the next generation,” he stated.

According to Lockett, storytelling is more than just verbalizing a narrative or reading a book out loud.

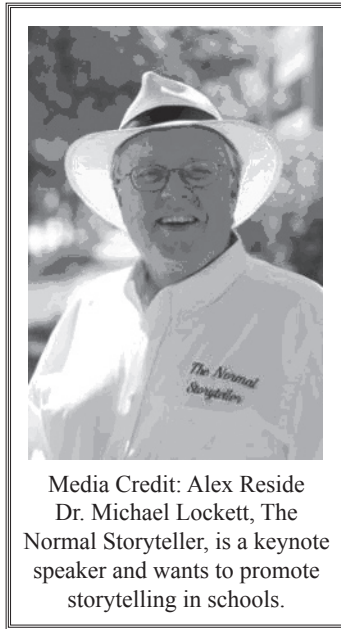
“Storytelling is the process of sharing ideas, words, and taking the ideas from your head and putting it into the head of someone else through verbal communication,” he said. “It’s the process of taking a story from your head, and putting it into their heart.”

“The purpose of a story is to move, inform or persuade someone. I prefer to do the moving, and to make others enjoy the moment.”

While Lockett began storytelling for young people, he soon realized that he had a more age-diverse audience.

“Almost all adults enjoy hearing stories as much as the young ones do,” he said.

Lockett specializes in several different types of stories, with many of them featuring distinct



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effects. His story collection includes folk tales, southern jack tales, historical stories, bible stories and tales from all around the world.

“People call me a teller of traditional tales in a non-traditional manner,” Lockett explained.

In order to individualize his stories, Lockett routinely adds different accents, dialects and noises to fit the story.

“I can do all kinds of weird imitations,” he stated. “I can probably do somewhere around 20 different dialects, as well as make many animal imitations.”

Lockett takes pride in all of his stories being clean, child friendly, high quality and containing good content. He has won several awards certifying that his material fits all those categories. All three of the CDs he has produced have been honored by the Creative Child Magazine, a family magazine with a wide publication. “Tales from the Hills” and “Tales from Around the World” were both awarded the magazine’s 2007 Seal of Excellence, while his latest CD, “Tales for the Young at Heart,” was bestowed as the Preferred Choice Award Winner for 2007.

“It’s a really good feeling [winning all the awards],” he said.

Lockett says he first began telling stories when he was a child in Sunday school, but began to really approach it when he became an elementary school teacher. He used his position to tell stories to his own class, other classes and groups of teachers. As a teacher, he also learned to use stories as an educational tool for his pupils.

“I’ve always enjoyed teaching through auditory learning, because so many students do well with the spoken word when a story is attached to it,” he stated. “If a student memorizes facts, they only use a portion of a brain, but if stories are used, it gives them an attachment to a permanent part of their memory.”

From there, his career as a storyteller truly began. A vocation that has lasted over 35 years and still continues to take him to new places.

After the word of his family friendly storytelling experience got out, there has been no lack of opportunities for him to share his stories. He has performed more than 1,500 times during his storytelling career, earning rave reviews and invitations to prestigious events.

Lockett has appeared at the National Storytelling Conference, the Illinois Young Authors Conference, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Educational Conference, the Rock Island Storytelling Festival, as well as dozens of other esteemed storytelling happenings. Many of the events he has performed at have invited him back to perform again.

His travels have taken him nationwide, not to mention worldwide. His tale-spinning journey has driven him to San Antonio, Orlando, Atlanta, and seemingly all over the state of Illinois. His stories have also taken him as far as the country of Taiwan twice, where he participated in a two week educator’s tour and shared his story with the Taiwanese. He also has plans in the making to visit China and possibly Korea in 2008.

Despite all of his fame, Lockett still remembers his roots. He performs every third Thursday of the month at the Normal Public Library from 6:45 to 8:45 at an event called the ‘Twin City Talespinners.’ The Talespinners event is essentially an open forum for storytelling. Lockett as well as other area storytellers perform, and are critiqued by audience members and storytellers in order to help them hone their storytelling skills.