

Salvation Army Treats Palmdale Primary, Erin Gilmour Students to Famous Storyteller

By Alex Dorsett, Feb 5, 2008

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Dr. Mike Lockett, American storyteller, is pictured with his wife Becky as he accepts a token from Salvation Army Administrative Assistant Lisa Armbrister (right) during his visit to The Bahamas. (Photo by Roland Rose for DP&A)

Dr. Michael Lockett has told tall tales and short stories for youthful listeners around the world on public radio and in locales from Taiwan to Canada, but this week the world-famous storyteller regaled students at two local schools, putting morals to music and lessons to laughter.

His appearances at Palmdale Primary and at the Erin H. Gilmour School for the Blind as well as a workshop for the Ministry of Education were a gift to The Bahamas from The Salvation Army.

“Dr. Lockett came to The Bahamas on board a Carnival cruise and apparently fell in love with the country,” said Captain Vernita Hepburn, field and program coordinator for The Salvation Army. “He called The Salvation Army and said he’d like to come back and share stories with Bahamian children and he volunteered to do a workshop with educators. We were honoured that he called us and thrilled when we saw him in action. This was such a wonderful treat for students and educators. He makes even a fairy tale seem like it’s happening in real life in real time and there’s always a moral at the end of a story.”

Students at Palmdale Primary and the School for the Blind operated by The Salvation Army showered Dr. Lockett with the kind of rapt attention usually reserved for x-box or Wii. And he showered them with entertainment interspersed with sound effects. “There was an old lady who swallowed a bird. How absurd! To swallow a bird! She swallowed the bird to catch the spider that wiggled and jiggled and tickled inside her...” With each mention of an animal, he imitated the sound and the audience hooted with giggles, belly laughs and applause.

With a host of awards and accomplishments to his name, more than 1500 appearances behind him and a fourth CD about to be released, Dr. Lockett is one of the world’s top storytellers. He’s a favourite on

Public Broadcast Radio in his role as The Normal Storyteller, often with his son. The name Normal comes from the town of Normal, Illinois where he lives. His motive for storytelling is simple: "Stories," he says, "need to be told or they will be lost." To make those stories lively in a high-speed world where entertainment sound bites fly at you a dozen a minute, he uses old-fashioned fun and well-honed talent, singing barbershop music, imitating sounds of nature, adding music to help tell the tale. In his denim clothes and straw hat, he's the image of a farmhand, wire rim glasses on a delightful, cheery face and hands that move constantly during presentations at schools, churches, conferences, workshops and libraries. A former teacher who often serves as an education consultant, a storyteller for more than 30 years, Dr. Lockett employs a dulcimer, a stringed instrument that helps him tell his tales in between connecting them with voice and sound.

His voluntary appearance in a day of labour and laughter is somewhat outside the realm of The Salvation Army's normal role providing physical, emotional and spiritual comfort to thousands of those who are needy, ill, elderly and alone, or in need of friendship, cheer and a hot meal.

"There was so much warmth and joy as Dr. Lockett shared his stories, it was a beautiful form of caring and sharing and that is what The Salvation Army stands for," said Major Lester Ferguson, Divisional Commander. "We are extremely grateful to him."

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