

For Immediate Release

May 29, 2012

Lights, camera and action brought to viewers by Schaumburg seniors



Toni Higgins-Thrash, Jay O'Toole, Sandy Johnson and Burke MacDonald pose with video cameras in the Schaumburg Park District television studio.

An energetic senior volunteer group doesn't need makeup or fancy costumes to create interesting local television.

Burke MacDonald and Toni Higgins-Thrash are members of a group that produces, directs and reports for the *Schaumburg Heartbeat* cable show. A fresh show focused on seniors is produced each month and airs on WSPD-TV, the Schaumburg Park District's channel.

The show was conceptualized in 2000 by Park District staff, MacDonald and Dan McNulty, a former NBC producer. Others including Higgins-Thrash soon joined the team and production was underway.

"I love meeting new people and hearing about what they enjoy doing," said MacDonald, a former guidance counselor at Addison Trail High School who became interested in television while in graduate school.

The skills MacDonald learned working with students and teachers in his professional guidance counseling career are the same ones he uses interviewing and telling stories to viewers.

MacDonald's time in front of the camera has landed him a few standout opportunities. He's reported on the Lima Lima Flight Team, a precision formation flying demonstration team from Naperville, Ill.; John Rippinger, an MIA hunter searching for lost pilots in New Guinea; Honor Flight Chicago, an organization that brings Chicago World War II veterans to Washington, D.C., for a day of honor; and sunset burnings of the Spring Valley prairie.

And MacDonald is not alone in his interviewing, camera operating and exploring of senior life.

Today's volunteer crew includes MacDonald, McNulty, Higgins-Thrash, Jay O'Toole, Connie Arkus and Sandy Johnson.

Higgins-Thrash, a past Schaumburg Park District cultural arts supervisor, began dedicating her time to *Heartbeat* five years ago after retirement. Her days filled with the arts were soon replaced with segments reporting from up-in-the-air hot air balloons and behind-the-scenes at Arlington Park and Medieval Times.

“Volunteering for *Heartbeat* is a rewarding experience,” said Higgins-Thrash. “I feel I am serving the community by providing helpful tips and showing resources that some area residents may not know are available to them.”

Each *Heartbeat* features three segments. The group meets each month to brainstorm ideas and schedule tapings. Ideas come from the newspaper, online sources and friends, and are focused on active seniors, senior services and the community.

“There is a challenge in finding people with a story to tell, and adding a visual angle to it,” MacDonald said. “We want segments to appeal to seniors and their 30 to 40-year-old children who may be caregivers and need tips on a new life stage.”

Despite the challenge, the *Heartbeat* crew pulls off an entertaining and educational show each month for audiences of all ages.

The show airs at 4 a.m., 8 a.m., 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., Monday to Friday and 2 a.m., 6 a.m. and 5 p.m., Saturday and Sunday on Comcast channel 15, WOW channel 14 and AT&T channel 99. Episodes also are available on parkfun.com.

Schaumburg Heartbeat is always looking for new ideas, reporters and camera operators.

For more information, call (847) 985-2115 or visit www.parkfun.com.

Daily Herald

Big Picture . Local Focus

June 4, 2012

Lights, camera and action

Submitted by Schaumburg Park District

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COURTESY OF SCHAUMBURG PARK DISTRICT
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