

Lip Sync Battle heads back to school

10-18-2021, Rutland Herald, by Jim Sabatase



Northwest Primary School teachers and staff perform in a video for Wonderfeet Kids' Museum's Lip Sync Battle fundraiser. From left to right: Nikki Adams, Margaret Ettori, Alicia Engel, Brittany Rajda, Lindsey Etcheson.

Provided photo/

This year's Lip Sync Battle is going back to school.

In a twist this year, the annual fundraiser for Wonderfeet Kids' Museum will exclusively feature teams representing area schools.

Six schools — Northeast Primary School, Northwest Primary School, Rutland Town School, Barstow Memorial School, Proctor Elementary School and Christ the King School — will compete for the title.

"We do so many programs and field trips that we definitely do feel a really close relationship with the schools," said Danielle Monroe, executive director at Wonderfeet.

Like last year, the event will be held entirely online due to the pandemic. The format, however, has not diminished the excitement, according to Monroe.

She said making a video gave teams the flexibility to do things they wouldn't be able to do in person, such as using a green screen and including more teachers, staff and students.

"Teachers are very creative. They're often looking for fun ways to kind of bond as a school community," she said.

Started five years ago, the Lip Sync Battle helps support the museum's Access Program, which provides affordable memberships for low-income families throughout Rutland County. The program has provided more than 275 low-cost memberships to area families over the past five years.

"We try to make (Wonderfeet) a place where we can really level the playing field for all families," said Monroe. "When they're here, everyone's getting that really high-quality, one-on-one, super creative experience."

Last year, the event raised \$27,000 in sponsorships and donations. Monroe said she is hoping to exceed that amount this year, stating \$13,000 in sponsorships already have been raised.

The community can visit Wonderfeet's website to view the videos and cast a vote for their favorite by making a donation to the museum. Monroe said people can vote for multiple schools if they wish.

The winning school will receive a choice of three classroom programs or field trips to Wonderfeet, or the option to hold a night of activities at the school.

Christina Sweet, who serves as event's chair, said the videos are fun to watch even if people don't have a connection to the participating schools.

She added that it's exciting to give teachers, who work so hard for their schools, a chance to cut loose.

"The kids probably don't see this side of them and I think that's a fun thing," she said.

Sweet said each school's submission is unique, stating, "No two are alike."

She pointed to Rutland Town School, which used a green screen to put its teachers in a variety of settings while they performed a medley of songs that included "Hooked on a Feeling" by Blue Suede and "Holiday" by Madonna.

Monroe said the personality of Northwest staff came through with their rendition of Whitney Houston's "The Greatest Love of All," which featured performers glamming it up in full ball gowns.

“They clearly were having so much fun,” Monroe said. “I mean, who has not listened to that song and been lip-syncing in their car? It’s impossible not to do.”

Other submissions include Barstow’s school-wide single-take performance “Can’t Stop the Feeling” by Justin Timberlake; Northeast’s puppet-centric take on “ABC” by The Jackson 5; CKS’ soulful run through an updated cover of Bill Withers’ “Lean on Me;” and Proctor’s parody of “Fancy Like” by Walker Hayes, featuring original lyrics referencing PES.

Proctor Elementary Principal Christy Coloutti said the event is an opportunity to build culture within the school community.

She said it’s also a chance to give back to Wonderfeet, which she noted has become a valuable local outlet for kids to exercise curiosity and creativity.

“The whole Wonderfeet atmosphere is phenomenal for kids and so many of our families attend there, so we thought it was really important to help support them,” she said.

Coloutti said she is confident PES, which also participated in last year’s event, will go home with this year’s title.

“While I think the other performances are fantastic, I definitely have to say, we’ll definitely beat them all,” she said. Monroe said she there are plans to hold an in-person Lip Sync Battle in the spring if the pandemic has receded by then.

“We do really want to go back to being able to do a live event at The Paramount (Theatre), she said.

In the meantime, she’s encouraging supporters of the museum to check out the videos.

Voting is open until Oct. 22. The winner will be announced Oct. 23.

Visit lipsync.wonderfeetkidsmuseum.org to vote and donate.