

Just Kiddin' to again entertain audiences

BY JESSE BELL
METCALFE

EMC Entertainment — Just Kiddin' Theatre is inviting all residents in the Ottawa area to come out and share some laughs as they put on their annual production at the Old Metcalfe Town Hall.

The theatre group has been in operation since 2005 and is designed to introduce youth in the area to the world of theatre by writing and producing plays, as well as being involved in a number of activities.

This year's production — titled *Surviving Camp* — was written by the students within the group, with the help of program director Andrie Nel, who says that the all-Canadian play is going to be a good one.

"It is a comedy," says Ms. Nel. "We created two rival camps on the same lake, and they end up competing for a camp cup and doing dirty deeds."

The annual production is what brings the two groups of Just Kiddin' Theatre together, says Ms. Nel.

According to her, every



Andrie Nel, the director of Just Kiddin' Theatre's upcoming play, *Surviving Camp*, gives "notes" to the kids after rehearsing a scene.

week the 32 children within the theatre company meet at the town hall. One group meets on Wednesdays after school and another meets Saturday mornings. Both groups are involved in the play and all have the opportunity to become a part

of the production, whether it is through acting on stage or doing work behind the scenes.

"The play is custom written in order to make sure that every kid gets a part," she adds. "There is equal opportunity and the audi-

tions [do] not prevent anyone from participating."

Ms. Nel explains that in Metcalfe opportunities for youth to get involved in such groups is nowhere as near available as in the city. That is why Just Kiddin' Theatre opened up. Not every child,

she says, is a sports jock, surrounded by the camaraderie and teamwork that comes with school sports.

"We provide an alternative team activity for someone who is more artistic," she says. "We are instilling the same discipline and teamwork, the same lessons you would learn being a part of a team."

Ms. Nel has first-hand experience in theatre, being involved in the industry for more than 15 years.

"My hobby has always been theatre, mostly community theatre," she explains. "I'm trying to model for the kids that it's good to take risks and I share my experience with them from hands on acting."

Lisa Rogers, who is a volunteer parent and has both of her children involved with the theatre company, says that Ms. Nel has been the driving force behind the successful activities within the group.

"If it wasn't for her previous knowledge we wouldn't be where we are," she says.

Ms. Rogers has been a volunteer parent since Just Kiddin' Theatre's beginning

and adds that she really only started helping out because of her children. But now she has a good time, saying, "It has rubbed off on me."

Her 12-year-old daughter Jessica is playing a girl named Helen in *Surviving Camp* and says she is excited to be on stage, but does not want to give any details away.

"I get worried if I don't know my lines," Jessica says. "But after a couple weeks I'm fine."

The young actress adds that she enjoys getting together with the different kids in the group and looks forward to seeing the end result of the hard work — a well-received performance.

Surviving Camp shows three times on the first weekend of May; May 1 and May 2 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, May 3 at 1 p.m.

Tickets are \$6 each and can be purchased from any member of the cast and crew, as well as online at www.justkiddintheatre.com.

More information on registration with the theatre group is also available online.