

MAGIC MAN

West entertains Willowbrook audience with magic, illusion

By **KRISTA KIELSMEIER**
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Even though he didn't make their homework disappear, Keith West's Magic and Illusion Show thrilled youngsters at Willowbrook Elementary the night of Nov. 7.

"He's being very, very good with us," said Shelly Franklin of the Willowbrook PTA. "He's doing like a 50/50 split with us."

The event was a PTA fundraiser. Tickets were \$7 the day of the show, with advanced tickets priced at \$6 apiece or \$20 for a family four-pack.

Guests packed the parking lot and then found seats in Willowbrook's gymnasium.

West, 47, matched a blue suit and suspenders with a pink shirt and performed his acts to music that ranged from Michael Jackson hits, the "Mission: Impossible" theme song and "I Believe I Can Fly."

Students sat at the front of the room, but parents expressed their surprise, as well, at some of the illusions.

"I thought it was very enjoyable, and the kids absolutely loved it," said Paul Chamberlain of Altoona. He attended the show with a group that included his two daughters who are Willowbrook students.

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Top: Magician/illusionist **Keith West** and his assistant, **Madeline Peyton**, entertain the crowd Nov. 7 during a PTA fundraiser at Willowbrook Elementary.

Above: Willowbrook first-grader **Madison Franklin**, center, hopes for the best during an illusion Keith West called "The Spikes of Death" as fellow first-grader **Jaxson Millard**, left, and third-grader **Tatum Little**, right, look on.



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 Eighteen stainless steel spikes appear to push straight through Willowbrook sixth-grader **Madigan Arend** in the illusion **Keith West** calls "The Spikes of Death."

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Willowbrook preschool student **Kory Wright** scoots away from smoke billowing from a box that contained his right shoe as magician/illusionist **Keith West** and his assistant, **Madeline Peyton**, react to a trick gone wrong.

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West's Entertainment Group in Des Moines puts on hundreds of shows across the United States each year. The Web site at www.entertainmentgroupcomedy.com lists comedians, speakers, magicians, variety acts, hypnotists, musicians, rides and games as options for an event.

West recruited student volunteers to take the stage in Altoona. He flattened a shoe, made a girl float and his orders were followed with, "Yes, master," after a bribe substituted for hypnosis.

For a few moments, Madigan Arend, 11, expected to be a victim of the "spikes of death," which West described as 18 two-foot, stainless steel spikes.

"It scared me," Arend said.

She rested on a table, the spikes emerged and Arend



ADAM WILSON/HERALD-INDEX STAFF

Delaware Elementary fourth-grader **Blaney Essex**, middle, and the rest of the crowd reacts to a trick performed Nov. 7 by magician/illusionist Keith West.

was "relieved" when she walked away from the trick with no damage. She called the show "amazing."

West said he has been fascinated with magic since he

was a 10-year-old, and West headlined his first show at age 12, when admission was 25 cents per person and his assistant worked for fudge.

At Willowbrook, West

danced with his female assistant, or "showgirl," Madeline Peyton, 23, of Urbandale.

Following the show, locals continued to purchase popcorn, and children gathered around West and Peyton for free autographed pictures. Magic kits and wands were for sale.

West said Entertainment Group shows can cost between \$300 and \$100,000 for organizations. He visits schools mostly in October, November and March, and corporate gatherings fill up the rest of his schedule.

He would like to return to Altoona, and as the crowds get bigger, so would the acts. For example, instead of Leo the Lion and Jake the Snake, which were artistic renderings of the characters, live animals could thrill crowds at a site like Southeast Polk High School.

"This is the first year, and it was a great turnout," West said. "It's promising."



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