

Kids learn tricks of movie-making

By TIM SMITH
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Tricks of the movie-making trade were shared with students during an all-day assembly Wednesday, March 29 at St. Paul's Lutheran School in Farmington Hills.

"Lights, Camera, Action," presented by Nicole and Shane Wright of Redford-based Mobile Ed Productions Inc., enabled youngsters in grades K-8 to sample everything from trick special effects to filming a music video and public service announcements.

"It's to see how TV and the computer make life so much more interesting," said St. Paul's kindergarten teacher Irene Suter. "It's to see how you can learn from it and understand TV. Look at all the tricks you can do."

Suter's class took part in the first of Wednesday's four 45-minute assemblies, each one with different features and twists.

For the first session, kindergartners and first graders watched how their bodies could be superimposed over actual

scenes, thanks to the wonders of technology. In groups of four, youngsters grabbed water skiing lines and jumped up and down, pretending to be battling the waves.

"You guys are lucky because you won't have to put bathing suits on," noted Nicole, who with computer technician Shane takes the Mobile Ed assemblies to schools throughout the Midwest.

Before the first group was dismissed, Nicole gave each student a piece of paper with square spaces, with a film-strip border.

"Whenever you make a movie, you draw pictures first," she said, handing out the papers. "You can design your own movie."

Flying high

During the second assembly, second- and third-graders were treated to more special effects. Youngsters were shown upside down, or instantaneously switching places with each other. Their skin turned blue in what was called "the Smurf effect."

And, in another, second-grader Danielle Sheppard played a Superwoman-like role, shown on

'Whenever you make a movie, you draw pictures first.'

Nicole Wright
—Mobile Ed Productions

video waving her arms and appearing to be flying through the air. But her classmates knew that Danielle really was laying on her stomach, on a green box, in front of a green screen.

That special effect is called chroma key, where images from two TV monitors effectively are merged into one scene. Nicole Wright explained the process this way: a color (in his case green) is selected to be erased via computer from the background; whatever remains is then superimposed over the image on the other monitor.

Subsequent assemblies featured the filming of public service announcements for the Michigan Humane Society and the videotaping of weather reports and commercials.

During the break between the first two sessions, Nicole talked about the benefits of the pro-

gram, put together to help students explore the latest technological breakthroughs.

"For the older kids, it's a chance to start considering what they want to be for the rest of their lives," she said. "I knew when I was in eighth grade that I wanted to be a theater technician."

"But we also push the idea that not everything you see on the screen is real. The monsters aren't real."

That apparently is an eye-opener for the younger audience members.

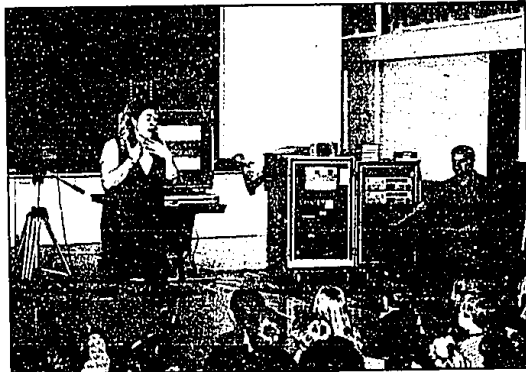
"Some have asked what they do with the dinosaurs in Jurassic Park when the movie's over," Nicole explained.

"Lights, Camera, Action" also was featured on Saturday, March 25, at Nardin Park



Tricks: Students at St. Paul's Lutheran School stand in front of a green screen as Nicole Wright shows how special effects enable people to be superimposed over different scenes as shown on the TV monitor at right.

Church in Farmington Hills and Elementary School in the Walled Lake District.



Film-making fun: Nicole and Shane Wright of Redford-based Mobile Ed Productions Inc. provided an array of cinematic tricks.

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