

Mom enjoys mixing family with show biz

By Dan Vecchioni
staff writer

Homemaker Judy Basile leads a double life.

Somewhere between keeping her Southampton house tidy, driving her son to and from nursery school, clipping her springer spaniel and watching "Sesame Street" with her daughter, Basile pursues a part-time career as a singer.

Part-time for Basile translates into perhaps one night a week performing with a band at a wedding, party or bar mitzvah. She admits she has no aspirations to become a recording artist or to travel.

"I'd like to make a go of it on a small-scale, nothing huge," Basile said. "Home and hearth are too important to me right now. One of the good things about this kind of work is that I can still be a full-time mother. The kids don't know I perform and don't even miss me. My son thinks I clean toilets and do laundry for a living."

Basile, 32, began singing publicly after graduating from Redford Union High School about 15 years ago when a friend who was getting married asked her to sing at her wedding. Soon, she was singing at the weddings of most of her friends and relatives.

"I met my husband (Frank, a pipe-fitter) at one of the weddings I sang at," she said. "In fact, he told me that night that he didn't like my style of singing. That was a great beginning."

As it turned out, it was. At the time, her husband (whom she says can't sing a note but is a good critic) was providing wedding photography as a sideline. He found her a singing engagement with a band for a wedding and — a star was born.

BASILE BEGAN performing on a regular basis on weekends, despite holding full-time positions — first as an insurance underwriter and later as a dental assistant. She also weathered

several band breakups. She finally had to take a hiatus when she and her husband decided to start a family, but not before giving it one last try.

"I went on an audition when I was pregnant the first time," Basile remembered. "The guys in this band were around 17 or 18 and probably never saw a pregnant woman before. I was not the image they wanted to project. Needless to say, I didn't get that job."

Following the birth of her children, Charlie, now 3, and Abby, 2, Basile decided to get back to singing but first had to lose some of the weight she gained during her pregnancies ("bands don't really want a female singer who is heavy," she said). She finally got back to performing last year.

"Being married with children is an advantage," Basile said. "The bands don't want you young or single. They want stability. I recently called to audition for a band and they asked if I could go on the road for three months. When I said no because I was married with kids, they suggested I take the kids with me. I wasn't willing to do that."

"Most of the people in this business are between 25 and 35, but in the last band I was with I was the oldest and they called me 'grandma.' That band broke up a couple of weeks ago and now I'm calling friends and checking the want-ads for bands needing a female singer."

Basile's repertoire consists of a variety of music — from Top 40 to '50s songs and old standards. "I give them what they want," she said. "I learn new songs by reading sheet music and listening to records. I'm practicing and singing around the house all the time. My son has even learned the words to some of my songs and will sing the background vocals when he hears me rehearsing."

IN ADDITION to her wedding and

party engagements, Basile has sung on a regular basis for the past nine years at Catholic masses celebrated at Schoolcraft College's Newman House. She has also written five lively songs that are performed at Newman masses.

"I don't play any instruments and when I've tried to learn it's been frustrating," Basile said. "When I wrote the songs, I had to sing them into a tape recorder and have someone else help me write them down. Now I always keep the tape recorder in the kitchen in case I want to tape something, and I can do it even with the kids tugging at me."

Basile said she enjoys the part-time singing life. She doesn't suffer from stage fright and likes the opportunity to wear clothes and makeup she normally would not wear (although, she said, she now changes into the outfit she performs in at the hall after getting too many funny looks from people elsewhere who thought she might be practicing an older profession).

"I'm kind of old to go all the way to the top. I should have worked harder and started earlier. If I started today, I'd be 40 before it happened," she said. "But it's a good business for someone with kids and I've met some pretty nice people."



BILL DRESLER/staff photographer

Singing mom

Sometimes Judy Basile spends days in the kitchen, cooking for husband Frank and children Abby and Charlie. And then there comes

the night she puts it all behind her, picks up the microphone and lets her voice take over.

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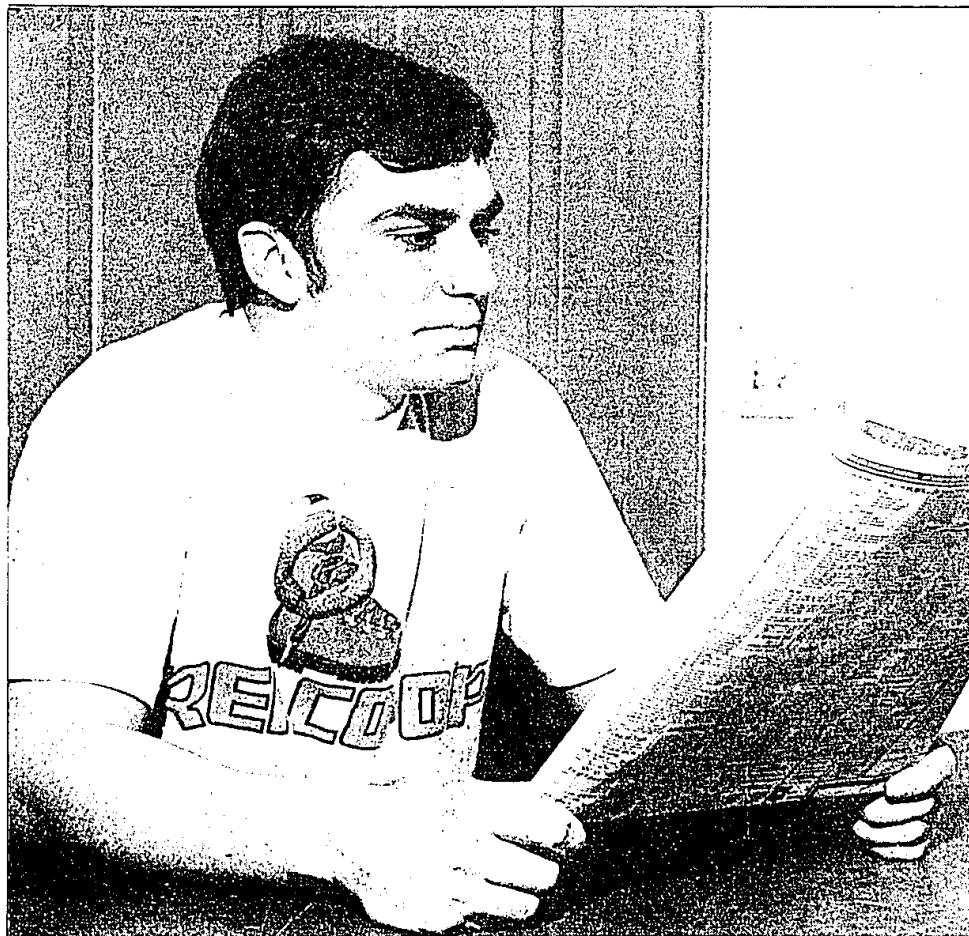
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McGruff visits Beechview school

The Farmington Hills Police Department, in cooperation with the Farmington Hills Parks & Recreation Department, will be performing a "Stranger Danger" program at the Beechview Elementary School gym at 10 a.m. March 16. This program is performed by the police departments' mascot, Officer McGruff, the crime-fighting dog, and the Parks & Recreation Department's mascot, Parkey the panda.

Teaching stranger awareness to small children can be a problem. However, the city of Farmington Hills is taking a different approach to this problem by using the two costume characters to get the point across. The program consists of a short talk on stranger danger by a uniformed police officer, a 15-minute film "Red Light, Green Light" and a short skit with Parkey and McGruff.



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