

Uploaded: Wed, Nov 15, 2017, 9:02 am

## 'Dorky' delights

Dorktales puts a silly twist on traditional storytelling

by Karla Kane / Palo Alto Weekly

You've probably heard the one about the three little pigs. You know, big bad wolf, huffing and puffing, house made of straw, etc.? But how about the three little hedgehogs, co-narrated by an indignant puppet with a posh British accent, given a slapstick spin and delivered at a brisk pace? Welcome to the wacky world of Dorktales Story Time, led by local voice-over artist and actor Jonathan Murphy (and his sidekick, Mr. Redge, the aforementioned hedgehog puppet).

"People say it's very hard to be entertaining for children but I've never thought so," Jonathan said. "As long as you're engaging, you bring them with you."

The concept is simple: lively, humorous storytelling. Murphy and his collaborators, using scripts written by Peninsula Youth Theatre's Karen Simpson Gardiner, put a new, proudly "dorky" twist on classic tales such as "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Jack and the Beanstalk." The Dorktales crew members rely on pure storytelling ability (including a variety of silly voices) to enthrall young audiences, with minimal props and no costumes or scenery necessary.

Dorktales is also part of a larger mission. The program is a spinoff of [Geek Club Books](#), a nonprofit organization created by Jonathan Murphy's mother, Jodi Murphy, which aims to empower the autistic community as well as to support public awareness and acceptance about autism.

Jonathan, who's on the autism spectrum, said the goal is "to spread information about autism through storytelling, through popular culture and in fun ways that are engaging to audiences." Geek Club Books started life as an app, with an animated story based on Jonathan's experiences, and now offers interactive comics, school assemblies and more. Dorktales, which boasts Jonathan's trademark goofy spin on traditional tales, was started as a way to help fund and promote the Geek Club Books organization.

"Geek Club's mission of inclusiveness is important to me. Kids are kids are kids. We're all different. We all have different skills and strengths. Different isn't better or worse it's just different, and kindness and inclusiveness should always be rewarded," Simpson Gardiner said.



Actor Jonathan Murphy performs with his sidekick, British hedgehog Mr. Redge. Photo by SpotlightMomentsPhotography.com.



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