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Camp Teaches Kids Tricks of the Magic Trade

By Jennifer Wake



Roy's Magic Camp students Mirabel Connor, Nick Vetterli, Sam Albertsen, and Sam Mataraso show off some tricks at the Hacienda De Las Flores in Moraga Photo Jennifer Wake

the presentation and working with the audience."

For example, students learned how to talk loud enough so people could hear them from the back, and if they had an audience member participate in the trick, they needed to learn how to position them on the stage so they didn't expose the trick.

Porfido brought in professionals who performed for the campers and explained some of the details pertaining to their specific genre. "It was really cool when he brought in jugglers, clowns, balloon artists, and ventriloquists who had performed for the Emperor of China and even Bill Clinton," said 12-year-old camper Sam Albertsen, who thumbed through seemingly blank playing cards that he could change into any card he wanted.

Nick Vetterli, age 12, who attended the camp last year as well, agreed that seeing the professionals in action was great. "I liked learning new tricks and getting to review old ones," he said, as he twirled a limp strip of black paper in circles before a final flick, creating a now stiff black cane. First timer Sam Mataraso, age 11, showed off his rope effect, which he mastered during the camp.

"You have these three pieces of rope that are different lengths," he said, while he brought the ends of each rope up to the tops, which were grasped in his straightened fingers. "When I pull them apart, they're the same length," he added as he completed his illusion with ease.

"The rope effect is his best trick," Vetterli said with a smile.

For Porfido, the camps are a way for him to bring up the next generation of magic entertainers. A key component? Porfido says to practice in front of your best friend: the mirror.

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Most kids love a good magic show, but few have the ability to put on their own show, replete with stage props and a large audience. Campers from Roy's Magic Camp (a two-week camp designed to teach magic tricks to students ages 7 to 12) put on a show for friends and family at the Hacienda De Las Flores on June 26 after much practice of their favorite tricks at the camp and at home, and after learning what a proper magic performance means.

Lafayette resident Mirabel Connor, age 7, showed off her favorite trick called Ghost Rope, using a rope and the illusion of a pesky ghost. "It's just a really cool effect," she said. "You say there's a ghost haunting the place and that it keeps playing tricks on you. At the end you have the 'ghost' tie a knot in your rope."

Like many of the other students in this camp, Connor says she's always loved magic and has watched a lot of great magic tricks on TV at home. At the camp, however, she not only learned the magic tricks, but about the overall performance.

"The tricks are the miniscule part of it," said Magic Camp Director, Roy Porfido, who has worked as a professional magician for the past 36 years. "What's more important is