

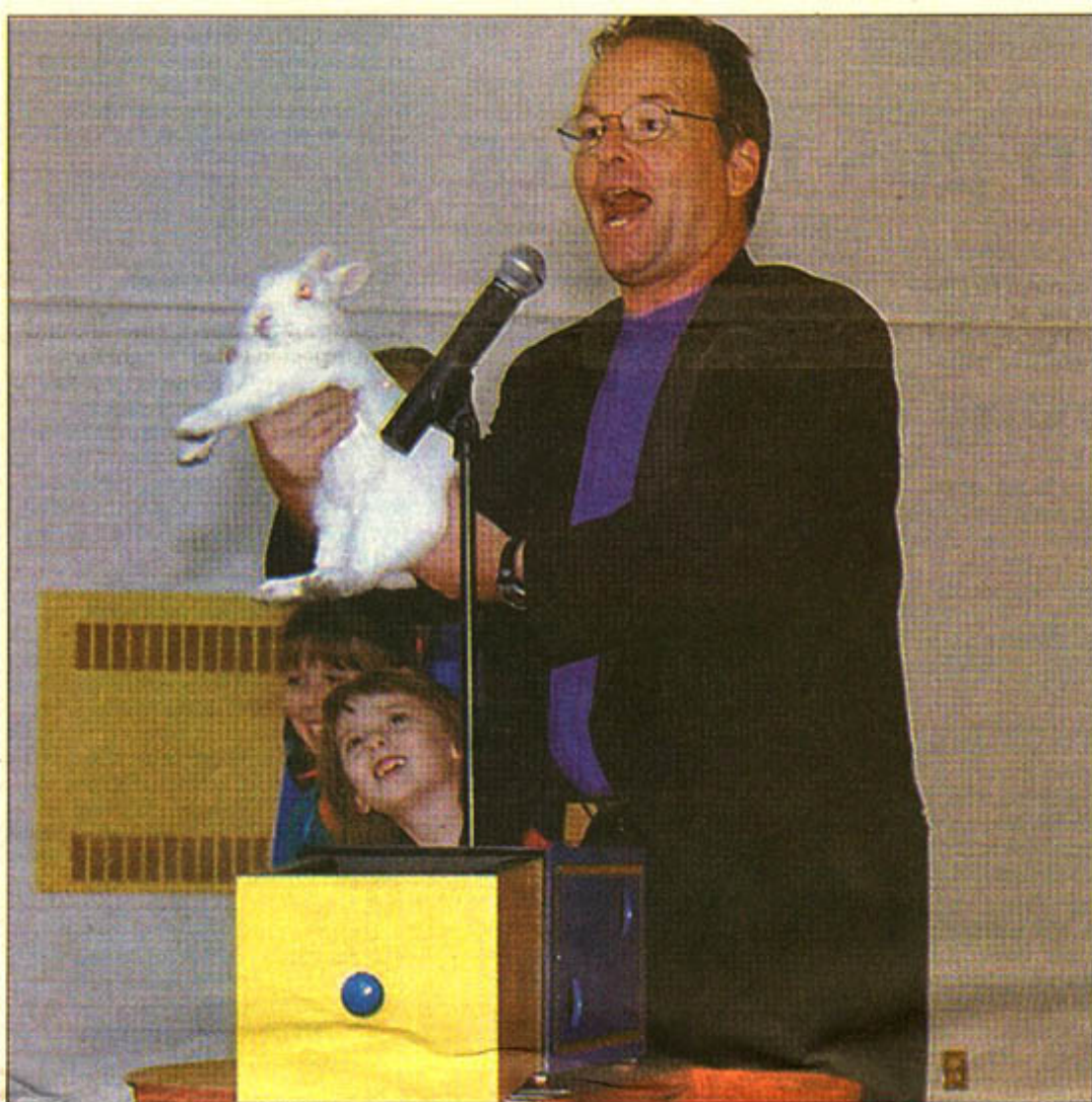
Hat News

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—NEWS PHOTO TIM SMITH

Motivational magician Steve Harmer pulls a rabbit out of an empty box during a performance for students at Connaught elementary school Wednesday. Harmer uses magic and humour to teach children to have character, courage, and to care for each other.

Magic and humour help to motivate youngsters

By NATALIE BANK
Medicine Hat News

Steve Harmer always has a little something up his sleeve. By pulling bunnies out of boxes and doves out of newspapers, the Calgary entertainer and educator has been using magic to motivate Hat students to have courage, character and to care.

The Connaught school gymnasium Wednesday afternoon was the setting for his final performance in the city this week.

He rode the tallest of unicycles, turned wands into flowers and balanced boxes on a single finger. Through these tricks and illusions Harmer wows kids into realizing what it is to be a good friend.

Harmer, a former teacher and principal, said students understand bigger concepts about things like acceptance and decency through small stunts.

"The reason I use magic is it's a way to illustrate points in a form that kids will remember more. Magic interaction delivers the message because they see it in a fun way."

Emily Catsirelis, a Grade 6 student, said her favourite magic trick was when a rabbit appeared out of a barren box. But she said that's not all she'll remember from Harmer's performance.

"I really enjoyed it. It was really fun and I learned a lot about how to be a better person." Grade 5 student Brett Griscowski thought it

was cool when he saw a dove pop out of a paper that had been ripped and magically waved in tact.

The act's message showed how torn people feel when others make fun of them, which he also thought was neat.

"I thought it was good for people who don't understand about friendship and encouragement and needing a friend."

It's exactly what Harmer hopes kids will keep in mind, long past his thrilling show.

He hails himself as a motivational speaker for kids, offering hope and encouragement to students as a way to help raise a higher standard of behaviour.

Harmer has been to almost 650 Alberta schools in the last three years. He also visited Ross Glen, Vincent Massey and Webster Niblock school this week.

Paul Houlston, vice principal of Connaught, said Harmer's performance fits in well with a new character building theme the school is adopting this year.

He said inter-relationships on the playground is one of the most important things kids deal with, and learning about it outside the classroom is a perfect fit.

"It's entertaining but it helps them focus on what the traits of a good character are, how they are affected by other kids and how they affect them on the playground. It just makes it clearer for them to understand."