



Kids give Jodi Koplin plenty to sing about

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Eat too many beans and you'll get gas. Riverwoods resident Jodi Koplin shares this pearl of wisdom in the playful title tune of her latest CD with her Jigglejam Band, "Jumpin' Bean."

The lively album of all original tunes by the popular children's entertainer features a diverse range of styles from "Achoo Blues" to the lovely lullaby, "Happily Ever After" in which kids are invited to "Sail away on your dream ship over clouds."

There will be an official release party for the album on Sunday, Jan. 15 at Space in Evanston.

Koplin said her songs are inspired by "being a parent and going through all the experiences that a parent goes through. I try to find the humor in some of those experiences."

Food songs

One example on the new CD is the song "Macaroni & Cheese," inspired by the time in many kids' lives when that's all they will eat. "And then all they want is peanut butter and jelly," Koplin said.

The busy teacher is also inspired by the many children she has worked with through the years. Some of those kids sing on the new CD as part of the 11-voice Jigglejammer Kids Chorus. The album also features 10 professional musicians, including renowned guitarist Robbie Fulks.

In addition to being highly entertaining, "Jumpin' Bean" offers some life lessons as in the rock and roll tune, "Stop, Drop & Roll," about what to do in case of a fire.

"I was inspired to write that when I was asked to be on 'The Bozo Show' many years ago for Fire Prevention Week," Koplin reported.

Koplin, who grew up in Lincolnwood, began performing nearly 20 years ago. "I always wanted to work with children and thought I would be a kindergarten teacher," she said. "As I got a little bit older, I was really interested in singing and music but wasn't encouraged by my family or my school and decided to start a career in social work when I was in college. I got to work with families and children and really loved that."

But Koplin never lost her love for music. She had started playing guitar when she was 18. "I always thought I wanted to make the world a better place — either by teaching or my social work," she said. "Then I thought, I could reach so many more people through music."

Music for kids

She launched her musical career by working with very young children through the Wiggleworms program at the Old Town School of Folk Music. "I've been teaching there on and off for the last 18 or 19 years," Koplin reported. "Things started to snowball from there."

The busy performer and teacher conducts Jigglejam and music classes through the Park Ridge Park District and teaches Wiggleworms classes in Glencoe in addition to her classes at Old Town in Chicago. She also frequently performs solo concerts as well as concerts with her Jigglejam Band.

Since her children are grown now, Koplin has more time to increase her volunteer activities. "I like to give back," she said. "Recently I've done some work with the Saving Tiny Hearts Society, which raises money for research for children with heart defects." Along with her husband, Kent Koplin, who plays the harmonica, she recently performed a benefit concert for A Safe Haven, a homeless shelter for families of veterans.

A percentage of the proceeds of CD sales at the Space concert will be donated to the Lacey Horwitch Foundation to raise money for research to fight RTH, a resistance to the thyroid hormone disease.

When you come to the Space concert on Jan. 15, be prepared to sing and dance.

"Everybody's a part of the show," Koplin said.

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