

# Donkey's 'Kidspeak' gives kids a voice

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The power of the spoken word is not just for grown-ups.

That's the message conveyed by Kidspeak, Donkey Cafe's monthly invitation for young people to take to the stage and share what's on their minds.

The kids' version of Donkey's regular spoken word open stage made its debut Tuesday. Word is spreading, and host John Coppinger would like for more young people to take advantage of future opportunities to grace the stage.

"From a father's perspective, I think it's really important for kids to have an outlet for the creativity of the written word and also an avenue to develop two of the most powerful weapons available — the written word and the spoken word," Coppinger said. "You put those two together and you can create confidence and strength in our youth that will never fail them."

The joy of being around young people's creative efforts is that every child has unique talents, he said. In his own children, Chi Tasha, 8, and Clay, 7, that artistic individuality is also apparent, Coppinger said.

"They both like to create stories," he said. "My son is less likely to speak, but he's really great at writing his stories."

The Kidspeak readings, Coppinger said, offer the opportunity for parents to nurture their kids' particular writing talents.

"It's a chance for parents and teachers to see the strengths in their kids and to work on those things and develop them," he said. "Each kid is an individual."

For the children who participate, Coppinger said, Kidspeak provides a rare outlet for which the audience comes specifically to hear the words of young people.

"It developed out of some kids' desire to come to the Designated Space on Tuesdays," he said. "(With) some of the material not being necessarily kid-appropriate at that late hour, we just thought it would be a good idea to offer a venue that would be a safe space for kids to read and hear prose and poetry."

Coppinger, a regular contributor to the Designated Space readings, said an audience comprised of so many quality writers would also offer constructive input for kids looking for advice or suggestions.

"We're hoping it evolves into not only a performance space but a workshop space where kids can get feedback if they specifically want it," he said.

Kidspeak is scheduled to take place at Donkey Cafe on the last Tuesday of every month. Sign-up begins at 6:45 p.m., and the readings last from 7 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. The Designated Space readings are still held every Tuesday evening at Donkey beginning at 9.

The following piece was written on the way to the anti-war demonstration in Washington, D.C., Jan. 18:

## PEACE

*Peace on earth and everywhere else  
Germany England Mexico too  
plus in everyone's shoe*

*No time to box or play with your Sox  
it's time to get down to the protesting*

*Protest all day protest all night  
make sure our country doesn't fight  
then when you're done protest some more  
and maybe our country will  
stop the war*

— Chi Tasha Coppinger