

He's no dummy: Ventriloquist takes character lessons to China

By **Cindy L. Smith**
Correspondent

Passports for dummies? Even if that were the name of a how-to book, this Norfolk traveler would never read it.

He's the real thing: a ventriloquist's dummy.

And he's about to journey to China for two weeks for several performances about character education.

"Character education is global," said Bob Walsh, the Bayview area ventriloquist who puts words in Matthew's mouth. "Kids all over can benefit from this kind of teaching."

Walsh said the performances in China will cover manners, kindness and one based on a Chinese cultural value — "happy children handle conflict without violence."

The money for trip was raised by a longtime friend of Walsh's, Lee Wing Hon, who teaches at the Yew Chung Education Foundation international school. Performances will include six at the Hong Kong campus and two at the Yintai campus, Walsh said.

Walsh, who used to perform in Norfolk schools as "Deputy Bob," has been a ventriloquist for 29 years.

He met his Chinese friend 20 years ago while serving in the Navy as a chaplain's assistant.

Walsh's ship had anchored in Hong Kong's harbor and Lee Wing Hon, who performs with puppets, was among the visitors to come aboard and watch Walsh's ventriloquism show.

Now, the two may perform together a few times during Walsh's trip.

Ventriloquism provides a platform that reaches across boundaries of race, nationality or language, said Walsh, who will turn 58 while on his stay in China.

The school Walsh will visit in China has students from several countries, and he is glad they all speak English.

Walsh and his wife Joy have three children and seven grandchildren. He currently works in law enforcement but is developing ventriloquism shows with environmental messages.

He said he hopes to restart his school performances after retiring in about five years.



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Bob Walsh, a Bayview area ventriloquist has performed in Norfolk schools as "Deputy Bob." He will visit China for two weeks to teach character education in schools there.

"This has been a passion of mine for many years," he said about his art.

As for traveling with his pal Matthew, Walsh said:

"He's going to be in with the checked-in luggage. And he may be squawking about it."

For more information about ventriloquist Bob Walsh and Matthew, send e-mail to them at bobwalsh.puppetshows@yahoo.com.

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