



News Release

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“Pickles’ Place” cable show reaches 100th episode milestone

w/ pics

HUTCHINSON and WILLMAR, MN – For five years, a fuzzy puppet named Pickles has befriended hundreds of families with young children through a local cable broadcast called “Pickles’ Place.” Now in its fifth season, the Ridgewater College Early Childhood Education production recently hit its 100th episode milestone.

“‘Pickles’ Place’ has been an amazing opportunity for my students to practice what they’re learning and to provide a fun service to the very audience they hope to work with and for some day,” said Cindy Salfer, Ridgewater Early Childhood Education instructor.

In each episode, a college student sits in a cozy chair and reads a short children’s book to the TV audience, bringing the story to life for both youth and their supervising adults (sometimes parents, grandparents or daycare providers). The Ridgewater students then lead an educational activity or craft for the youngsters to do with their adults, complete with a supply list.

Featuring one college student per episode, each recording helps the college students build their confidence in reading aloud with people watching and experimenting with various character voices. It also builds confidence in creating fun, doable and reinforcing activities for youth and in giving clear and simple directions. Students build their planning skills and evaluation of age-appropriate activities as well.

“Pickles initially was just a green fuzzy puppet the students and I would bring to class or to activities with preschoolers,” Salfer explained, “but with the expertise of Jer Lanska, Ridgewater’s Media Specialist, the goal has now become to bring literacy to young children. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children introduced to reading early on tend to read earlier and excel in school compared to children who are not exposed to language and books at a young age. This is just a small way that the students in Ridgewater’s Early Childhood Program can help.”

Lanska agreed. “It is great to be a part of something that allows students to make an impact on the community by being on an actual television show and where copies of the show are being put into the hands of daycare centers,” Lanska explained. “Making this show look professional has been a joy of mine. We have been constantly improving it, so for this new fifth season, I am excited to have a newly designed set and an additional camera adding another viewpoint.”

Learn more about Pickles' Place and broadcast schedules at www.ridgewater.edu/picklesplace . Episodes air in Hutchinson on Hutchinson Community Video Network (HCVN) cable Channel 10 Monday through Friday. In Willmar, tune in to WRAC Channel 18 Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays.

Meet Pickles!

Families with youth ages 4-10 years will have a chance to meet Pickles in person at a Ridgewater family event coming up on April 16. As part of the national Week of the Young Child, and thanks to support from the Hutchinson community Grow Your Own grant, Ridgewater will host its second Dig into Learning at the Ridge event with dozens of fun activities for families with young children. Pickles will be among several activities in the Early Childhood Education area of the college. The event is free and open to the public and will run 4:30 – 7:30 p.m. on the Hutchinson campus.

Submitted photos

Meet the legendary Pickles!

Ridgewater College Early Childhood Education student Laci Mccann gets ready to read her book for another episode of "Pickles' Place," a local cable TV show aimed at giving students experience and improving childhood literacy.

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Ridgewater College is a community and technical college with campuses in the central Minnesota communities of Willmar and Hutchinson. The college serves more than 5,000 students through its nearly 100 academic programs and more than 68,000 training hours for individuals and businesses through customized training and continuing education. The college is a member of Minnesota State and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

Minnesota State includes 30 community and technical colleges and 7 state universities serving approximately 400,000 students. It is the fourth-largest system of two-year colleges and four-year universities in the United States.

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