



A Hypnotic Evening



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Student Council President Dan Spangler may have been a willing volunteer for Waterford High School's annual hypnotist show, but he probably never expected to find himself believing he was in a hip-shaking contest, dancing to Shakira's "Hips Don't Lie."

Spangler's dance moves were just one of the many crowd-pleasing moments at hypnotist Jim Spinnato's annual event held last week.

Despite any later embarrassment Spangler might have to endure for his stage antics, he knew what he was getting into. Before this year's entertainment began he remembered those who had been on stage before him, controlled by the commands of Spinnato.

"Sometimes they'll hypnotize the shy kids, and they'll get up there and dance. It's great," he said.

This year Spangler, like many of the other nine students who stepped onto their school's stage to volunteer for the show, was prepared for events to come since he had seen the show in previous years.

"It's become a tradition," Student Council Co-advisor Kate Peruzzotti said.

Tickets were sold during school lunchwaves and at the door. Money raised from the show went toward paying for gifts the council had donated to needy families through the Women's Center of Southeastern Connecticut two weeks ago. Still, the event has become more than a fund-raiser.

"It's fun for them even if we don't make a lot of money," Peruzzotti said.

Over 100 students and parents roared with laughter as they turned out to watch their friends and children embarrass themselves on stage -- all in good fun, of course.

Spinnato began the show by telling the audience that anyone can be hypnotized.

“All you have to do is get serious,” he said.

Once volunteers had made their way on stage it was only a matter of minutes before they were under hypnosis and following Spinnato's every word. It was then that the show really began.

The audience howled with laughter as volunteers became convinced their noses were made of silly putty and a fellow classmate was actually Justin Timberlake.

Hypnotized students were also disgusted when they were told to audition for a commercial for “Jim Spinnato's Breath Spray,” which Spinnato told them “tastes horrible but you want (the job) so bad.”

At one point Spinnato even told the students they were holding their favorite stuffed animal, prompting students to name their toys. They came up with “Pink Mr. Big,” “Teddy” the brown bear and “Sparky” the giraffe, just to name a few.

For his final act, Spinnato featured the students individually, making volunteers believe they were everything from models to cowboys to members of the Village People.

“I would not do that,” a hypnotized Christine Patziga said after watching classmates perform the Y.M.C.A. song.

Moments later Patziga was on center stage, believing she was in a body-building competition, flexing her muscles for the crowd.

While the production was quite memorable for the audience, volunteers had little recollection of their own public exhibitions by the end of the night, even after coming out of hypnosis.

“How long do you think you've been up here?” Spinnato asked.

“Like five minutes. Two?” Patziga answered.

“I just sat down,” another volunteer, Britney Manueri, said.

“One hour and 45 minutes,” Spinnato finally told them.

“Say what?” Patziga replied, standing up to check the nearest clock. ■

Waterford