

# Silly Sam teaches pre-schoolers music with original tunes

By Suzanne Schmidt  
Staff Writer

Every Friday, children at Kids 'R' Kids Meadow Pointe arrive smiling because it is Silly Sam day.

Silly Sam The Music Man, or Eric Halvorsen, teaches his music curriculum to the students where they learn about rhythm, instruments and musical terminology.

"I teach an original curriculum based around my songs," Halvorsen said. "I want the kids to have fun with music. It is amazing what they can learn. By the end of the year, they should be able to understand musical values."

The Lutz resident writes interactive songs to keep the children singing and dancing.

"When I was coming up with the cur-



Halvorsen teaches students about the differences between a violin and an acoustic guitar. (Photo by Suzanne Schmidt)

riculum, I knew it had to be interactive," Halvorsen said. "I didn't want to just stand up in front of them and play. I write songs so there is a lot of movement and motions."

Children either learn about songs from Halvorsen's instruction or through the music itself. Halvorsen teaches his curriculum at three Seaborn Day Schools in Tampa as well.

"Some songs cater to a specific rhythm or there are some other educational aspects to the delivery of the song," Halvorsen said. "I teach rhythm by letting them either sing or clap along in the melody. They learn music is fun and about the value of notes like what a treble clef is."

Each class has a different purpose. During the last class of the month, Halvorsen introduces students to a new instrument.

"I have a lot of friends that are musicians who let me borrow their instruments," Halvorsen said. "They get to look at it and they hear me play it."

Showing the instruments to the students helps to reinforce the ear training lessons Halvorsen teaches.

"I play CD's of different music for them," Halvorsen said. "This way they can learn to recognize different instruments they wouldn't normally hear like bagpipes."

Jaya Sriram, lead teacher for the voluntary pre-kindergarten program, is a big fan of music and Silly Sam's curriculum.

"The kids learn a lot about music," Sriram said. "They will remember some comment he made or some music he taught. It gives them an idea of what music is. The curriculum is simple, but at the same time it covers all the basic stuff they can learn at this age."

Halvorsen thinks music is important for children to know about.

"It is something that is always around us," Halvorsen said. "Music comes from our hearts, it doesn't just come from an instrument. I hope they will have an appreciation of music and an understanding that every-



Halvorsen gets the kids Braydon Runioin, left, Heylien Edwards and Jenna Horne, right, dancing. (Photo by Suzanne Schmidt)

body can make music."

Music has been a part of Halvorsen's life since he wrote his first song in the seventh-grade. He started writing contemporary music and added children's music five years ago. Recently he added writing jingles.

"I write everything from love songs to pop songs," Halvorsen said. "I am just a guy with an acoustic guitar."

Leighton Lewis, 4, said he always has lots of fun when Silly Sam performs.

"He likes to do silly things," Lewis said. "I like it when we get to line up and dance and then he tells us to freeze and then we get to start dancing again. When he plays the violin and the drums it is really fun."

Jenna Horne, 4, said she loves it when Silly Sam comes to her school.

"I like the silly stuff he does," Horne said.

Halvorsen will be performing as Silly Sam at the Festival of States at 5 and 6:30 p.m.

March 25 at Vinoy Park in St. Petersburg.

Halvorsen also owns Clowning Around, which provides children's entertainment including clowns, look-alike characters, balloon animals and face painters. His company can do everything from children's parties to corporate events.

Before becoming a children's entertainer, Halvorsen, 36, was assistant director of a day care in Richmond, Virginia for eight years. He then moved to Florida and began working with Clowning Around when it was still owned by Mary Lynch. He is married to Michelle Halvorsen with two young daughters Ember, 6, and Abigail, 8. For more information visit [www.clowningaroundtampa.com](http://www.clowningaroundtampa.com).

Silly Sam also has a CD full of educational and fun songs for sale. For more information or to hear samples of his songs, visit [www.myspace.com/sillysamings](http://www.myspace.com/sillysamings).