

Lifestyles

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TRICKS are for KIDS

Brothers, magicians focus on hocus-pocus

by **JOLENE ZANGHI**
Reporter

Top hats, tricks, rabbits and routines. Faster than you can say "abracadabra," the Hamilton brothers make frowns disappear.

Eighteen-year-old Danny Hamilton and his younger brother, Joey, 14, know a few things about what it takes to be professional magicians. Growing up with a father who had a passion for performing tricks and illusions, the two have been running their own small entertainment business for about a year.

"Charlie and Checkers" — their stage names — have gained popularity as a duo, performing before audiences that range from small groups of children at birthday parties to hundreds of patrons at theme parks and sporting events.

The routine — sometimes including kid sister Amy — is filled with all kinds of entertainment. Unicycles, a big, yellow balloon that can hold a person inside, and a small, brown rabbit named Trixie are some of the more popular elements included in the sibling spectacle.

"I practiced riding a smaller one in the hallway of our house for a while until I got the hang of it," said Joey — aka Checkers the Clown — as he described how he learned to balance on the 5-foot-tall yellow

unicycle used in the show.

The freshman at St. Mary's High School in Lancaster added that he looks at each performance as another shot to perfect the act and feels it's a great learning experience.

Danny, or Charlie the Cowboy, is a freshman at the University at Buffalo. He said he's learned that juggling work, school and a personal life can be tricky, but he is thrilled to have had the opportunity to have fun and do what he loves.

"We decided we were both good at it and wanted to entertain Western New York," he said. "The hardest part is getting on your feet. Once you're slightly established, it's not hard."

Performing more than 20 shows throughout the summer months kept the brothers very busy; their show was booked as the pregame entertainment at a Rochester Red Wings event, as

well as part of the juvenile diabetes walk at Martin's Fantasy Island.

The business is a true family affair. While they said they've been influenced by many great magicians and illusionists such as David Copperfield and the local entertainer, Nels Ross, the brothers admitted they've learned most tricks of the trade from their father, who has been a huge inspiration and mentor to them both. When the show is booked for a larger audience, their 7-year-old sister, Amy, becomes an assistant.

The Hamilton brothers said they frequently watch online videos of other magicians and research new tricks to perform to gather some ideas for improving their act. While their routines usually last 45 minutes to an hour, they tweak the gig according to the ages of the audience and always have a hidden message up their sleeves, such as encouraging viewers to never give up on their dreams.

Following their passion for making people laugh, the two said they see nothing but opportunity in the days ahead.

"We don't have any end in sight," Danny said. "As long as we're having fun and it continues to fit in

Dinner of Polish delicacies planned

A Polish dinner will be offered from noon to 5 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 2, at the Polish Falcons Hall, 445 Columbia Ave., Depew. Golomki, Polish sausage, pierogi, sweet and sour cabbage, potatoes, rye bread, coffee and dessert are on the menu. Takeout is available, but no telephone orders will be taken. Call 684-2373 for more information.



The Hamilton brothers, Joey, left, and Danny, pose with a few props incorporated into their act while performing as "Charlie and Checkers," which includes a pet rabbit, Trixie. The duo have had a successful first year promoting their small business, entertaining audiences at more than 20 shows throughout the summer months.

Photo by Scott Schild
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Seven-year-old Amy Hamilton, left, assists her older brothers, Joey and Danny, when their magic act is booked for larger audiences. The brothers, known as "Charlie and Checkers," have performed everywhere from Collins, N.Y., to Tonawanda.

our schedule, we'll keep doing it."

For more information on Charlie and Checkers, visit www.charlieandcheckers.com.

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