

School of Rock returns to Camp Bongopix in Whitney]



By Mike Riley

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According to a March 27 posting on Facebook from the Camp Bongopix page, their School of Rock program is starting back up again every Tuesday from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. through the month of April at the Bongopix Tavern. Led by Camp Bongopix owners Bongo Bongo and Andrea Ruzzo, School of Rock is not a traditional music education but prompts kids to discover new music and learn team building skills. Ruzzo comments on this musical opportunity for the community's kids of all ages.

Ruzzo tells Bancroft This Week that School of Rock is one of her and Bongo's passion projects, and that they're thrilled to be offering it again to the youth of South Algonquin and the surrounding area.

?We started the sessions in April of 2016 after hearing from lots of parents in the community that they were lacking access to musical programs and education. April is traditionally a pretty quiet month for us from a business perspective so we had the luxury of a little bit more free time and we had the space to host the kids, so it was a natural fit for us to try this out,? she says.

Ruzzo says the first session was a hit, so they held it again in November and in April of 2017. She says it became so popular that they couldn't host all the kids that wanted to participate at Camp Bongopix, so they partnered with Whitney Public School and brought hour long sessions into the classroom. They did that every year until COVID-19 hit and they had to pause the program until now.

?School of Rock is not traditional music education. We don't sit down and teach the kids how to read music, we want to be clear about that. The sessions are meant to help kids discover new music and to learn team-building skills by playing various percussion instruments together as a band,? she says.

Ruzzo says that she and Bongo are the band leaders and they try to pick familiar kids' songs as well as more well known classic and

country rock songs that everyone can play along to. She says they have a tickle trunk of percussion instruments from maracas, to bongo drums, to wood blocks and washboards, and the kids are encouraged to choose one that speaks to them and explore how to use it.

?It's a very free-flowing, noisy room with a lot of risk-taking and exploration. We also incorporate a lot of movement exercises and call and response techniques. It's a super silly and fun session and kids of all ages really seem to enjoy it. Ultimately, we want to provide a fun atmosphere where kids can learn music in a way that doesn't feel like school. We expose them to songs that they may not have heard before and to instruments that they may not have ever seen before. We provide all the instruments, as well as a healthy snack to all participants. There is no cost to attend, it's free! she says.

School of Rock has a total of 20 spaces available for each session, according to Ruzzo and it runs every Tuesday for the month of April. She says if enough interest is shown, they may bring it back in November or early December of 2023 during the off-season. She says all participants need to sign up ahead of time and fill out a permission form, which can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/bongopix>.

?The response has been pretty phenomenal so far, and we still do have some spots left, she says. ?So, we encourage anyone with little ones aged three years plus to join us.?