



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Matthew Lawrence started Knights of the Classroom as a way of making history fun for students.

# Humour basis for unique teaching program

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It didn't take Matthew Lawrence long to realize the marketing world wasn't for him.

After working for a few firms in Toronto, he was tired of the lifestyle.

"You had to buy chapstick in bulk with all the ass-kissing required," he said.

Humour and acting were much more up his alley, so a career change was needed.

Kids all over the region have been thanking him ever since.

The Holland Landing resident started

the Canadian Improv Showcase in 1996 and hasn't turned back.

The group helps actors pay the bills in between gigs, Mr. Lawrence explained.

School, workshops, corporate sessions, golf entertainment and a rehabilitation program exploring the healing power of laughter are just a few things the troop does.

They have been in about 700 showcases worldwide and have visited nearly 400 schools across Ontario.

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# Hands-on learning successful

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"If you're an actor trying to make ends meet, you don't want a real job because it limits your flexibility," he said.

But operating the theatre troop for 15 years wasn't enough for Mr. Lawrence.

He started the Knights in the Classroom program a few years ago and it has been a success. The program provides students hands-on experience of the middle ages through demonstrations. Mr. Lawrence goes all out, dressing up in 250 pounds of body armour and showing off his medieval martial arts skills.

"They go nuts. They love it. They can't get enough. Quite frankly, it's a lot of fun for us. The joy on the kids' faces when you do stuff like this is palpable," he said.

With the help of his wife, Andrea, who is teacher, Mr. Lawrence made sure the educa-

tional program touches on all aspects of the curriculum.

Walking into Mr. Lawrence's house, you can tell he is fully invested in this. The walls are adorned with shields, body armour and awards.

He and his wife had a medieval-themed wedding. They have a family coat of arms "I'm trying to fulfill a childhood dream of being a knight," he said. "I'm going to United Kingdom this summer to research out the wazoo."

Mr. Lawrence even plans to send the Queen a letter asking to be knighted. Life certainly isn't boring. He described himself as an octopus trying to get control of his eight legs.

Recently, Mr. Lawrence was nominated for a character community award for his work with the Canadian Improv Showcase and the Knight in the Classroom programme.

"It was a big honour for me," he said.