

## Storyteller soars She takes listeners to magic places

By LYNNE COBB

Everyone loves a good story, and Karen Czarnik, 42, of Commerce Township can really weave one. More than 10 years ago, this wife and mother of two heard a storyteller at her son's preschool, and she was hooked. Karen's background in performing arts, youth theater and music blended perfectly with her newfound love -- storytelling. No tall tales here as Karen talks about her creative career.

### Why storytelling?

Stories are the basis of human connection. ... They keep traditions going.

### What does a storyteller do?

A storyteller tells stories by the heart. It can be referred to as story performance, but it is generally not book reading.

### Can you explain how?

For example, I tell world folk tales. So I find a story, research it from a variety of cultures, write an outline and then create a story, authored by taking the bones of a story and recreating it. I become intimate with the story, like a spokesperson for it.

### Who is your audience?

All ages, but primarily children at libraries, schools and neighborhood campouts. I also perform at coffeehouses and conventions for adults and teach workshops for all ages and abilities.

### Where do you get your material?

I have a lot of books and collect them from different cultures and countries. I also use the Internet to find sources.

### You are musical, too?

Yes. The songs are not interwoven into the story, but I tell stories and sing during performances.

### What is your favorite tale to tell?

My favorite current story to tell is called "Magic Crab." ... I treasure the story because of the fun characters and animals I get to portray.

### What are the rewards?

It is extremely rewarding that I can entertain, be creative and be paid to have fun. It brings balance to my family.

### It's been a rough morning. You are real grumpy and you have a performance. Now what?

I usually have about a half hour to transition from stress to getting to work. I do my vocal warmups and practice voices. When I see the crowd gathering and see the kids and they start asking questions, they get my enthusiasm rolling. Child audiences are generous and excited. It lifts my spirits.



(Detroit Free Press photo/J. KYLE KEENER)

### What do you do when you're performing?

I love to travel. I also do support work for my husband's company and volunteer with Girl Scouts, my children's sports and theater activities, children's drama at my church, various fund-raising projects for nonprofits and storytelling organization committees. I am also working on my first CD and hope to have it ready by spring 2007.

#### Learn more

Karen suggests attending a storytelling event. "Show up to listen, attend an open mike event, and then stand up and try it!"

- To learn about Story Rhythms by Karen Czarnik, call her at 248.766.4323 or go to [www.storyrhythms.com](http://www.storyrhythms.com).
- For assistance learning about the art of storytelling, resources, local guilds, upcoming local and national events or locating a storyteller, go to [www.michiganstorytelling.com](http://www.michiganstorytelling.com).
- Coming soon is the virtual storytelling site, [www.iTales.com](http://www.iTales.com).

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## STORY RHYTHMS

*Stories and Music that Enchant, Encourage, and Tickle the Funny Bone!*

**Karen Czarnik, Storyteller & Musician**

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