

'Aristocats' Comes To Chocachatti

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BY LINNEA BROWN

BROOKSVILLE - Jazz is the universal language.

Those are the memorable words spoken by an alley cat in Walt Disney's "The Aristocats," and it's a lesson learned and loved by local elementary school students at Brooksville's Chocachatti Elementary.

This week, dozens of the school's third, fourth and fifth graders will present their version of the 1970 animated musical, complete with jazz-flavored songs, dance numbers and colorful costuming and makeup.

Since Chocachatti is home to a micro-society performing arts program - in which students volunteer for specific jobs - participating in the production is actually a "job" for students in the program.

The show has 49 cast members, with 11 students taking on stagecraft responsibilities of working the show's lights, sound and set changes.

They all help weave the tale of a family of aristocratic cats, catnapped by an evil butler and tossed out into the countryside.

With the goal of making it back home, they are helped by alley cats, geese, dogs and a mouse, and "everyone winds up with a nice home in the end," said music teacher Becky Ickstadt, who is one of three directors of the production.

The ending provides a unique correlation to the production's partner: The Humane Society of The Nature Coast, where the goal is to see each animal wind up with a nice home, she added.

Brooksville-based Jacqueline's Designs is providing professional stage makeup for the production, with volunteers providing its costumes.

Other directors are dance teacher Rhonda Bowers and drama teacher Nancy Kraus.

With two in-school performances Wednesday and Thursday for their peers, fellow students will pay admission to the performance with "micro money," earned through their own micro-society jobs at the school.

Public shows will take place at 7 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday at Chocachatti, located at 4135 California Street in Brooksville.

Admission is free, but donations are accepted.