

## AT YOUR DISPOSAL

# Eco-Troubadour helps kids smile & think green

By Jim Johnson

In talking with Stan Slaughter, it's unclear whether he or his youthful audiences get more out of his traveling environmental education show.

"We move. We sing. It's been said I'm a cross between Pete Seeger and the San Diego Chicken," said Slaughter, who bills himself as the Eco-Troubadour.

He brings the world of waste and recycling and composting to thousands of kids at 80 to 90 schools each year through guitar and song. "It's exhausting and I break into a full sweat," he said, while doing the high-energy show.

Slaughter's act is aimed at elementary school children, with one version of the program geared toward the younger folks and one version for older kids.

In the show for children in kindergarten through grade 2, Slaughter will simplify the message. "We use a smaller vocabulary and we sing more and have more involvement. A lot of our songs have hand motions."

Getting the kids to physically participate in the songs helps promote learning through "the brain-body connection," he said.

The show for the younger kids lasts about 30 minutes with six songs, while the show for older children is about 45 minutes with four songs.

"As an educator, as a musician, I know the music works for kids. It's exciting. It's fun. It kind of validates the teachers' message," he said of his work.

"I've been an educator basically all my adult life," he said, including 11 years as a biology teacher. He's spent the past 15 years or so working as the Eco-Troubadour as a full-time job, taking his show on the road to schools in 25 states.

Slaughter became the Eco-Troubadour in about 1990

when public money started to become readily available for solid waste and recycling education. "I was already a guitar player and educator and when it became possible to get funding to go to schools, it made a lot of sense to teach kids about recycling and environmental responsibility," he said.

Most of his work is in the Midwest, with about half of the work in Kansas through a long-term relationship with the state

Department of Health and Environment. Slaughter will sing songs, talk about environmental issues and explain the importance of reducing, reusing, recycling and rethinking, he said.

"It's a rapid-fire survey of the solid waste scene," the Lee's Summit, Mo., resident said about his show. "It's easy to love what you do. It's easy to get up for the next show simply because you see what happens next will have an impact on somebody's life."

When he sees kids walking down their school's hall after a show singing one of his songs, that's when Slaughter knows he's made a connection.

"It doesn't get any better than that," he said. "That's the thing that keeps me going. It's been and continues to be a labor of love. There's a lot of good feelings."

Slaughter figured he has performed before more than 600,000 students over the years, and he gets a kick out of people getting a kick out of his show. "The thing I find exciting is that people like the idea that some guy is doing this," he said. "I get to see all of middle America. It's a joy in that way."

There's more information about the Eco-Troubadour at [www.stanslaughter.com](http://www.stanslaughter.com). •

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**HE LEANS GREEN:** Eco-Troubadour Stan Slaughter entertains a crowd at the Kansas City Zoo.