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Whitefish Bay company brings 'Stinky Shoe' and 'Coach LaRoo' to the screen

Videos help kids learn sports fundamentals

By **Jordan Fox**, for *SBT*

Stinky Shoe and Coach LaRoo. Who are those guys? If you're a parent with a youngster who wants to play soccer or baseball, you may have already heard of them. They are offbeat, animated characters featured in several locally produced videos teaching 4- to 10-year-old kids to play those sports. The videos have been produced by A.L.L. For Kids Inc., a new Milwaukee-area company, with a creative bent.

Ann King, Deanne Monaghan and Shelly Lamoreaux are three local women with entrepreneurial blood running through their veins.

The trio started their company in July, 2002, after determining a need for videos for those sports. Monaghan's 7-year-old son had expressed an interest in playing soccer but didn't know how. So she searched for educational material on the subject and wasn't impressed with the quality of what she found.

After more research and discussions, the three women, who have marketing, sales and advertising backgrounds between them, decided to form a partnership and go into the instructional video business.

"We want to come out with essentially two series of videos — one of them a fundamentals of sports series and the second, a movement and play series. The latter because there is a childhood obesity problem in this country and we want to do videos that inspire kids to exercise more," says King.

"The Fundamentals of Soccer with Stinky Shoe & Coach LaRoo' and 'The Fundamentals of Baseball with Stinky Shoe & Coach LaRoo' were our first two videos," she said. "We moved fast on those and had them produced three months after we incorporated. Each is a 30-minute production incorporating music, live action with real kids and their coach and the animated, wacky antics of Stinky Shoe and Coach LaRoo characters."

A.L.L. For Kids plans on producing more in their series of instructional videos for kids. "We believe that given the proper tools to learn the game, a child and parent will feel more confident in participating in the sport," says King.

"Get Active With Stinky Shoe and Coach LaRoo at Camp Imagination" was released in November and is a physical fitness production designed to teach children that exercise can be fun and rewarding, according to King.

The partners enlisted the aid of local talent in creating their instructional videos. Tri-marq Communications produced them; Dave Sinker, formerly with Chicago's famed Second City improv group, was the writer; AHA Studios in Racine did the animation; and Great Lakes Media Technology duplicated and packaged the finished video.

"We've seen very good response to our first two productions and anticipate the same for our next one," says King. Through their effective in-house marketing efforts, they've garnered national recognition from the Dove Foundation, an organization that reviews children's products and endorses them as "family-friendly," as well as the Parents Choice Foundation.

"We were pleased about these awards, because that established credibility for our products," King says.

Favorable reviews were also generated in *Metro Parent*, *Dane County Kids*, *The Old Schoolhouse*, *Parenting* and *Kids First* magazines.

"And most recently in September, the 11th annual report of 'Dr. Toy's 100 Best Children's Products 2003,' which was just released, cites our series as one of the '10 Best Children's Audio/Video/CDs for 2003' and one of the '100 Best Children's Products for 2003.' 'Dr. Toy', who is really Dr. Stevanne Auerbach, is an expert in play, toys, children's products and education," says King.

The company, based in Whitefish Bay, now utilizes about 12 distribution channels, including schools and libraries. VHS and DVD versions of their videos cost \$13.95 and \$17.95, respectively.