

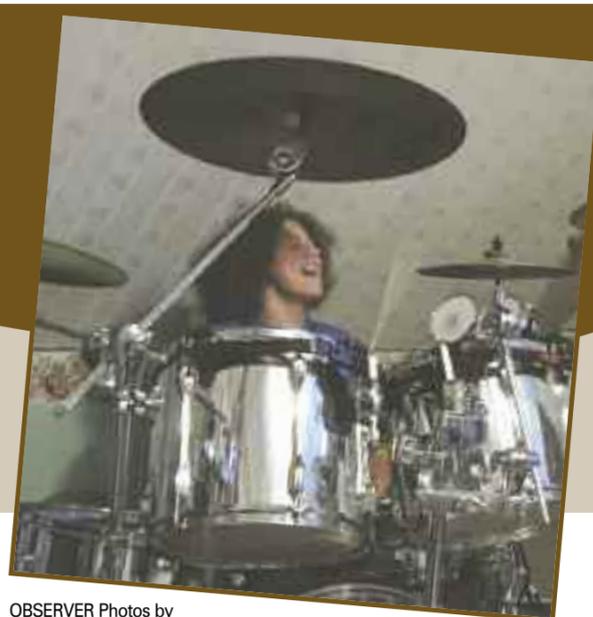
# Lifestyles

OCTOBER 4, 2009  
SECTION C

Sunday OBSERVER

## Relative ways

Local band finds inspiration in family



OBSERVER Photos by Joel Cuthbert

**At top: Drummer Andrew Douglas is only 14 years old and already hailed as the "backbone" of the band. At left: It's hard to say whether this photograph is a publicity shot for the Dunkirk-based band Rinky Dink, or a family portrait. Picture are band members Marty Tazer, Gary Douglas, Andrew Douglas, Ed Ramos and Ryan Taddio.**

band member. Then Ed, a second-generation percussionist, and Ryan, a singer with no formal training but a voice ideal for this newfound, ragtag group of musicians, were called and the band Rinky Dink was officially formed.

"We didn't have enough equipment or anything ... that's how the name came, we used to say we're rinky dink; we didn't have anything," Gary explained.

What they do have is a chemistry and musical ability beyond their years. Each of the band members felt being family adds to their chemistry, allowing a deeper, more subtle form of communication, helping them improve as musicians, and, ultimately, making their performances more natural.

"It makes us better and it makes us even closer friends and family all together," Andrew said.

Ed agreed, explaining his commitment to his family is strong and so makes his commitment to the band even stronger.

Although their music has only reached the public's ears this past summer, Rinky Dink already has a solid set list of about 35 songs which they play throughout Dunkirk. They play a wide array of songs from all eras and genres of music, from classic oldies to contemporary goodies: The Beatles, Santana, AC/DC, Michael Jackson, Alice in Chains, Collective Soul, and on and on. With the band members influenced by differing backgrounds and time periods, the diversity of the band's set list matches the diversity of the band members themselves.

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By **JOEL CUTHBERT**  
OBSERVER Staff Writer

With years of experience, loads of enthusiasm, and a unique blend of tradition and talent, there's nothing rinky dink about this Dunkirk-based band — except the name.

It's a family; it's a band. No wait, it's Rinky Dink, an intergenerational, interracial amalgam of both.

Family/band members are 14-year-old founder and drummer Andrew Douglas, father and guitarist Gary Douglas, cousin

and lead vocalist Ryan Taddio, uncle and percussionist Ed Ramos, and adopted-uncle and bassist Marty Tazer.

Their story started decades ago with a long line of conga-banging ancestors, including Andrew's grandfather and uncle Ed. But for our immediate purposes, it started a few years ago when Andrew, now a third-generation percussionist, received a cheap \$200 drum set, with the formation of the band soon to follow.

"And the rest is history," Gary said, though, in fact, it was just the beginning. While Gary thought his son's interest in

the drum set would fade within a week, it quickly turned into a passion — a loud, dish-rattling passion.

After the introduction of Andrew's fateful Christmas gift, Gary, who had played in a number of local bands as a youth himself and remembered a few AC/DC songs, began playing guitar alongside his son. A short time later, a visit to Crino's, where Gary and Andrew saw a number for a bass player, led to a jam session with Marty, whose bass spoke louder than his words and who was soon accepted as an honorary family member and an irreplaceable

## Yesterdays and Today's ... More back to school facts

Although the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been in the news over the life-span for many citizens of the United States, a survey by National Geographic revealed that 75 percent of 18- to 24-year-old respondents could not locate Israel on a map. Similarly, 63 percent could not locate Iraq, a country where our ground troops have been for several years. Closer to home, only 50 percent of school age children could locate New York State, 20 percent could not locate the Pacific Ocean, and about the same number could not even locate our country.

As with last week's column, which highlighted the lack of basic civic and historical literacy, including rampant ignorance of significant events that have shaped our nation, this week the reader may be equally appalled by the rate of geographic illiteracy. Again, the reasons are similar. Many Americans choose to spend an inordinate amount of time on mind-numbing activities such as television and surreal pursuits of alternate reality video games, or, in apathy don't search out and analyze current events. Many may also hold an egocentric view of the world as evidenced by 74 percent believing English is the primary language in the world. However, given the fact that the Chinese population is much larger than that of the United States, Mandarin Chinese is the obvious choice. School age children may be the victims of time constraints teachers are under to meet many curricular demands and/or various trends falling in and out of vogue in American schools where some disciplines such as geography are neglected.

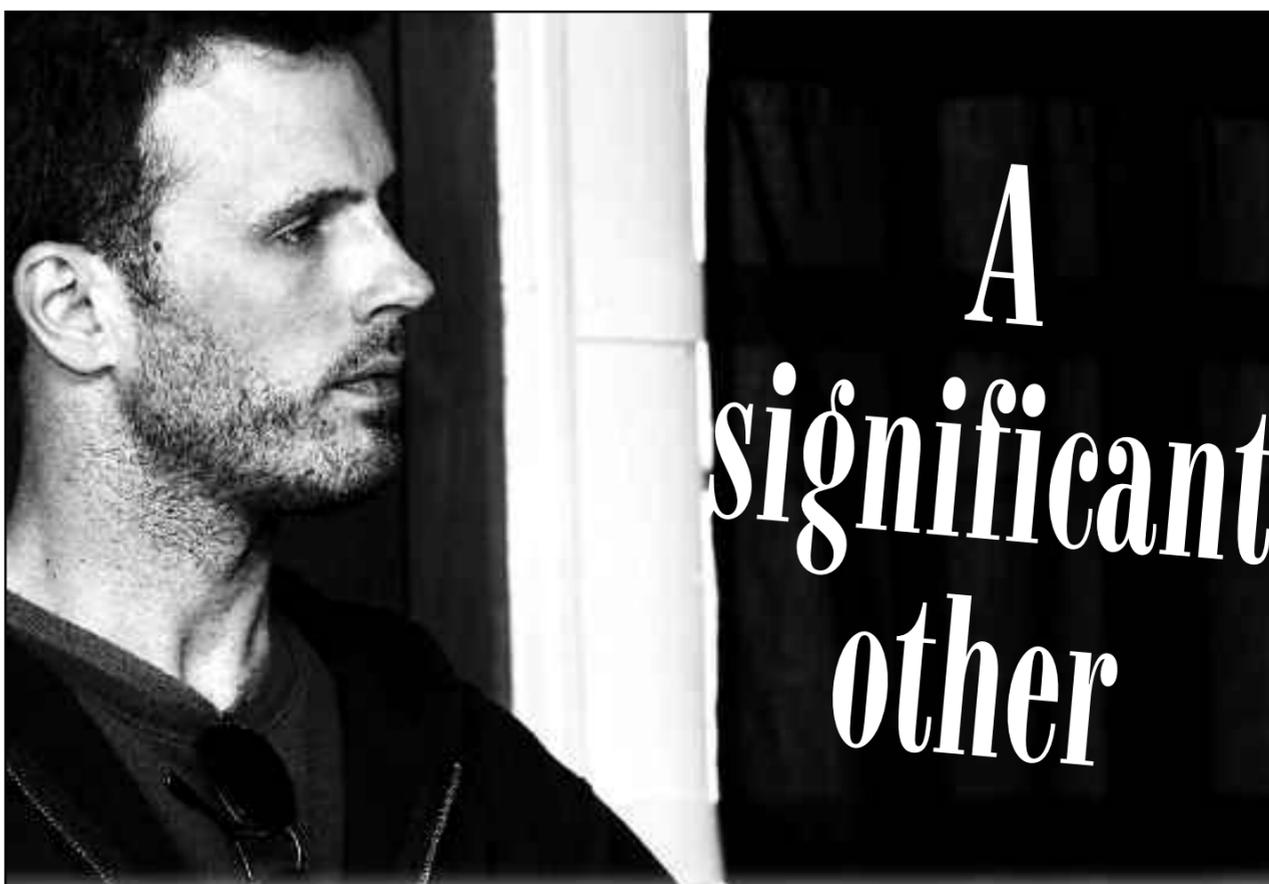
See **FACTS**, Page C5



**Rosamond Gillespie Burns**



**Mary Burns Deas**



## Marketing leads to the silver screen for one Fredonia native

By **STEVEN YUNGHANS**  
OBSERVER Correspondent

With a budget of around \$7,000, filmmaker Robert Rodriguez's Spanish language action film, "El Mariachi" was the crowd favorite at the Sundance Film Festival in 1992. It also set a high bar for independent filmmakers looking to make their way on to the silver screen.

The film, which was later "cleaned up" and distributed nationally by

Columbia Pictures, became an inspiration for legions of budding filmmakers who started producing low or "no budget" films well outside the traditional studio system in American film.

John Schwert, a Fredonia native who now splits his time between California and North Carolina, is one such filmmaker who found his own way onto the big screen without the support of major motion picture studio.

**"Don't worry about whether you're shooting HD or film or whatever, just start, grab a video camera and start shooting away. What (are) the stories that you want to tell and figure out what your voice is."**

John Schwert

See **SCHWERT**, Page C5

**LIVING**

# Cassadaga Library Association holds fall meeting

CASSADAGA — Members and guests met recently at the Cassadaga Library for the fall meeting, with refreshments. Hostesses for the meeting were Lettie Milligan and Nita Silliman. All enjoyed freshly baked pumpkin pies and coffee. The refreshment table was decorated with fall decorations of napkins and plates.

The business meeting was conducted by Vivian Gow, vice chairman of the group. Trudy Coulcher, secretary, read the minutes of the previous meeting and these were approved by all. Treasurer Diane Shaw gave the financial report of the group, and talked with new treasurer Kathi Runkle about the

bookkeeping.

Guests at the meeting included Gail Kelly, Sally Dickinson, and Ida Balona.

Each month, a mystery package is brought to the group and awarded to someone present. This month's package was prepared by Ida Balona and won by Lettie Milligan.

The program for the evening was Cassadaga Librarian Catherine Heath. Librarian Heath spoke of the recent additions to the library, and the continuous updating being done. Librarian Heath spoke in detail about the new barcode system that the library will be establishing for the books, tapes, and other items. With the new barcode system,

one will be able to locate where a particular book or tape is located in any of the Chautauqua County libraries. A card catalogue at the Cassadaga Library will still be available to help locate a book within the local library. A new copy machine was approved for the Cassadaga Library. Librarian Heath said that she has researched many copy machines, and found one which would fit the needs of the library, and presented the results to the group for their approval.

The next meeting of the Cassadaga Library Association will be held on Oct. 26 at 7 p.m. in the Cassadaga Library. The program will be a special book report by member Kathi

Runkle, and a book report by member John Sipos. Refreshments will be served.

The Cassadaga Library Association had its beginnings in 1938, when a group of ladies met at the home of Jeanette Edgar to form plans for a singing club, which led to the largest community project at that time, the formation of a village library.

The library grew until a new building was constructed on Maple Avenue in 1993, and has served the village residents. The Cassadaga Branch Library is a part of the Stockton Library, which also has a library in the hamlet of Stockton.

New members are always welcome.

# Fredonia Central School offers fall Community Education Classes

Fredonia Central School will be offering the following classes for the fall session of the Community Education program. For questions or to register, call the Community Education Coordinator, Wendy Heslink, at 679-1581 ext. 2701. Most

classes start the week of Oct. 5 unless otherwise noted. Checks for class fees should be made payable to Fredonia Central School Community Education, 425 E. Main St., Fredonia 14063. All additional material fees are to be paid

to the instructor, unless otherwise noted.

- **Co-Ed Volleyball:** Kevin Persch, instructor. Mondays and Tuesdays, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. in the Middle School Gym, starting Monday. Fee: \$3 per night.
- **Walking the Halls of**

- FCS: 4 to 8 p.m., Main Campus Hallways, Monday thru Friday starting Oct. 5 until May 28. Fee: \$20. When participants register, additional materials will be distributed.**
- **The 20-40 Young Men's Basketball:** Ed

- Nichols, instructor. Mondays and Wednesdays, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. in the Elementary Gym starting Monday. Fee: \$3 per night. No-one under age 20 will be permitted. No Saturday classes.
- **Stained Glass:** Lin Finger, instructor. 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., High School Room 107, begins Oct. 6 for eight weeks. There will be an extra fee for supplies. Registration fee: \$30
- **Over 40 Men's Basketball:** Tony Malinowski, instructor. Wednesdays, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. in the Middle School Gym, starting Wednesday. Fee: \$3 per night.
- **Introduction to Meditation:** Colleen Vanderzyden, instructor. 7 to 8 p.m., High School Room 230, Wednesday. Fee: \$15
- **Stampin' the Nite Away:** Sylvia Rowe,

- instructor. 6 to 9 p.m., High School Room 535, Oct. 6, 20, Nov. 3, 17, Dec. 1, 15. Make cards using designer papers, punches, glitter, vellum, techniques such as embossing, emerging colors, and a mulberry technique. One class will be devoted to lunch tins with dividers. Fee: \$15, lunch tin class \$20.
- **5-Hour Pre-Licensing Course:** Mike Pauly, instructor. 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Saturdays, Oct. 17, Nov. 14 and Dec. 12, Jan. 9, Feb. 6, March 6, April 10 and May 8, High School Room 109. Participants must pre-register and are to bring their permit and writing utensil to the class. Fee: \$20
- **Stress Reduction Techniques:** Colleen Vanderzyden, instructor. 7 to 8:30 p.m., High School Room 230, Nov. 19. Fee: \$15.

## Schwert

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"I worked in marketing and advertising from 1999 to 2004," Schwert said as his newest feature length film, 'In/Significant Others,' was about to debut at the Boston Film Festival.

"I'm sort of self-taught. I didn't go to film school," Schwert said.

After graduating Fredonia High School in 1993, Schwert earned a bachelor's and master's in marketing and went into brand marketing for a number of banks and other businesses in and around Charlotte, N.C.



Submitted photos courtesy of Fourth Ward Productions  
**Producer/Director John Schwert with Burgess Jenkins who plays, "Bruce Snow" in the independent film "In/Significant Others."**

"I found myself just really drawn to the side of marketing that's more of the production side, the storytelling aspect to it," he said.

"I was working really hard. I was kind of like, if I'm going to work this hard, I might as well do it for myself. I started up my own company in 2003 and started bidding on small little jobs, doing stuff like that then it sort of parlayed into getting the script for my first film."

ously I don't direct or produce them, but the skills are very similar to what you learn in a small film," Schwert explained. "They can translate into a big film and you can make a decent living off of doing that."

Through that time, Schwert was also working on the story and script for 'In/Significant Others,' his next big personal project.

"I thought what was really important with this film was to get the production value look and feel correct, to get it right. To give it some value so that when we do go out to sell it which is what we're doing right now," Schwert said.

While "Among Brothers" worked well for what it accomplished, Schwert and his production company made the film on a fairly small budget. For his next feature length project, Schwert wanted to improve on the production quality of the film.

and how it affects the decision-making in those relationships and the effects of that," Schwert said. "All the characters are, in different ways, tied to a murder investigation."

"One of the main characters is a guy that works as a cameraman at a public access station so a lot of the narrative plays through his lens," Schwert added. "A lot of the interviews that happen in the film are tied to the character backstory and what's sort of happening. As the film evolves and progresses you see how those two stories are intertwined and how the cameraman is manipulating even people watching the film."

The Fredonia native's education in film making is well outside of the classroom.

"I think the best advice would be to sort of channel Robert Rodriguez, ('El Mariachi,')" Schwert said.

"One of his quotes that stuck with me the most was, 'If you want to make films and you want to be a filmmaker well then make films and be a filmmaker,'" Schwert recalled. "Start shooting stuff, start shooting whatever you can get."

"My knowledge of filmmaking was 100 percent self-taught. I started to do my own little short films, my own productions, spec commercials and stuff like that," Schwert said. "I sort of taught myself what was needed to accomplish what you wanted to accomplish from a story-telling standpoint without having to go to formal training."

watching things and doing them" Schwert said, "then you learn better than I think you would learn from a book."

Currently Schwert is trying to market "In/Significant Others" and get it into the hands of as many distributors as possible with the hope of a buyer for major release. The film has been shown at the Boston Film Festival where it received Best Screenplay/Screenwriter credits and received an encore showing at the Kansas International Film Festival on Oct. 2. It also claimed awards at the Charlotte Film Festival and will be screened at the Port Townsend Film Festival in Washington and the Bahamas International Film Festival later this year.

"It's really going to be a long hard process because even the Toronto Film Festival, I just read something about the films that got picked up there, there's only a couple (independent) films," Schwert said.

He added some sage advice for those who are looking to start working independently on film.

"Don't worry about whether you're shooting HD or film or whatever, just start, grab a video camera and start shooting away," Schwert said. "What (are) the stories that you want to tell and figure out what your voice is."

"Insignificant Others" is produced, written, and directed by John Schwert, starring Burgess Jenkins (Remember the Titans,) Andrea Powell, and Brian LaFontaine and is a Fourth Ward Production. More information about John Schwert's film and upcoming productions can be found at <http://www.4wproductions.com/>.

"Dateline NBC did a big story on (the film and the unsolved case) in 2007 so that really catapulted us to be able to get a good distribution deal and it's available around the world now," he said. "You can get it at Blockbuster and Netflix, retail stores, and Amazon."

The project and subsequent exposure from it not only gave Schwert a lot of experience in producing a film and marketing it but also some name recognition among his would-be peers in the filmmaking industry.

After finishing "Among Brothers" and the publicity behind it subsided, Schwert started writing scripts and working on a variety of different productions including short film projects, features, and commercial work through his own company.

According to the Internet Movie Database, Schwert was involved in a number of major Hollywood productions as well including Pineapple Express, Step Brothers, Superbad, Norbit, and Talladega Nights.

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ously I don't direct or produce them, but the skills are very similar to what you learn in a small film," Schwert explained. "They can translate into a big film and you can make a decent living off of doing that."

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While "Among Brothers" worked well for what it accomplished, Schwert and his production company made the film on a fairly small budget. For his next feature length project, Schwert wanted to improve on the production quality of the film.

"We were able to not just spend more money on that, but creatively come up with ways to make the production look a lot bigger than it was," Schwert explained. "We accomplished that with a series of really well thought out, pre-visualized shots."

Going back on one of his specialties, one of the things he had done for the bigger Hollywood studio projects like Talladega Nights, Schwert used the knowledge of his surroundings to pull off some of his movie magic.

"I do a lot of location scouting on the Carolinas so I knew exactly the places I wanted to get and how I wanted to capture the film and I think it shows in the work," Schwert said.

"In/Significant Others' is an ensemble, character driven drama that follows around a group of characters and examines relationships and manipulation in those relationships and how that manipulation affects those relationships

and how it affects the decision-making in those relationships and the effects of that," Schwert said. "All the characters are, in different ways, tied to a murder investigation."

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Schwert said if you want to go to film school and learn the technical trade, that wouldn't be a bad approach but if you really just want to make films and tell stories, start telling them.

"I've watched a lot of films, I've always liked films and I think if you watch films and you have the aptitude to pick up on (them.) If you learn from

United States.

- Name the five Great Lakes. (Did you know that they make up approximately 20 percent of the world's fresh water supply? This certainly has an environmental impact and could be the site of possible conflict in the future with the world's need for water.)
- Name the geographic location from the War of 1812 where Commodore Perry defeated the British fleet and " ... sent the famous message, 'We have met the enemy and they are ours.'" (*On-This-Day.com - September 10, (2007, April 17). Retrieved October 1, 2009, from http://www.on-this-day.com/onthisday/thedays/alldays/sep10.htm*) Hint: It is close to home.

There are numerous resources available to improve geographic literacy. One, named "My Wonderful World," is a campaign spearheaded by National Geographic with the mission to "expand geographic offerings in schools." It has several co-sponsors including the American Federation of Teachers, Association of American Geographers, the National PTA, and the Smithsonian Institution. The president of the National PTA summed it up as, "Geography exposes children and adults to diverse cultures, different ideas, and the exchange of knowledge from around the world." (*ArcNews Summer 2006 Issue — National Geographic Society ... (2009, September 5). Retrieved October 1, 2009, from http://www.esri.com/news/arcnews/summer06articles/national-geographic.html.*)

Sites to check are [www.mywonderfulworld.com](http://www.mywonderfulworld.com), as well [www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com) and numerous others with such key phrases as "Americans lack basic geography."

*Make it a good week. Rosamond and Mary.*

## Facts

Continued from Page C1

Whatever the reasons, according to several National Geographic, the evidence clearly shows that, "... young Americans are alarmingly ignorant of the relationships between places that give context to world events." (*The Seattle Times: Nation & World: Most young Americans can't ... (2009, September 24). Retrieved October 1, 2009, from http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/nationworld/2002968325—findiraq03.html.*) As stated in the study, geography, in a large measure, shows the connections between people and places. As the world globalizes, the need for a geographic perspective becomes more essential. Such a perspective has certainly been true in the study of history and understanding the patterns of settlement, population centers, and conflicts over resources.

Following are some questions to test your basic knowledge of geography. Rate yourself and decide if and where you need to improve. While many may be easy for you, remember that this is not the case for many fellow Americans. For example, only 26 percent could name our first president in the study highlighted last week.

- Name the four oceans.
- Name the seven continents.
- Name the countries that border the United States to the north and south.
- Name the oceans that border the United States to the east and west.
- Name the two states that are not part of the mainland.
- Name the largest and smallest states.
- Name the longest river in the United States.
- Name the largest river in the United States. (This is determined using length, watershed/basin, and rate of flow.)
- Name the two major mountain ranges in the

United States.

- Name the five Great Lakes. (Did you know that they make up approximately 20 percent of the world's fresh water supply? This certainly has an environmental impact and could be the site of possible conflict in the future with the world's need for water.)
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Comments on the story may be sent to [lifestyles@observertoday.com](mailto:lifestyles@observertoday.com)