

## Television show to be filmed in Apex

by Shawn Daley

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For the past several months downtown business owners Pam and Mack Thorpe have been closely guarding a big secret.

Each time the Thorpes spoke with friends, employees, customers – even their own children – the secret danced precariously on the tips of their tongues but never once slipped.

It wasn't easy to keep quiet. Day after day, week after week, they struggled to keep their exciting news to themselves.

But The Rusty Bucket owners feared that

one wrong word spoken to somebody could jeopardize a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Finally, during a barbecue held Sunday evening at the New Hill home of actor and film producer John Demers, the Thorpes were met with the words they were longing to hear. They were free to share the secret with whomever they pleased.

And what a secret it was.

Starting this fall a new kids' television show, The Rusty Buckets Kids Club, will begin filming in downtown Apex.

The show will focus on two young children as they travel back in time to visit with historical figures that are still in their teenage years.

Much of the filming will occur at The Rusty Bucket and several other downtown businesses along with shots at the New Hope Valley Railway in Bonsal.

"We're so excited about it," said Pam Thorpe. "It was very tough not to talk about it. The girls in the store didn't know and our kids didn't know. We were afraid if we said anything and the word got out it would jinx us."

Demers came up with the idea for a kids' show several years ago. It was always his intention to base the project in the Apex area but it wasn't until earlier this year he began to choose his locations.

"I thought I had diamonds in my backyard," said Demers, who has lived in New Hill for 15 years. "I just needed to dig them up, polish them off and see which ones I could use. I determined I had a town I could use and I love the community.

"I had a train in my back yard so I needed to work on that angle. I also wanted to do a kids' program to get away from all the stuff I used to do that my kids can't watch yet."

As the creative side of the project came together the search for locations got underway.

One day while walking down Salem Street with his children Roxanna, 11, and John Coleman, 8, (who will both star in the show) they stopped at The Rusty Bucket.

"As we passed The Rusty Bucket my kids wanted to go inside," said Demers, who is a longtime customer of the store. "As I stood in the store I realized this was the spot and we would call it The Rusty Bucket Kids Club."

Demers was excited about finding his perfect setting. The Thorpes, however, weren't sure what to think.

"We've known John for years and he came in one day and said he was working on a story," said Pam Thorpe. "He said he liked the feel of our store and it was just what he wanted to use.

"We told him we would talk about it but then he got sick and we didn't hear anything about it for months. To be honest, we never really thought much about it."

But when Demers went back to speak with the Thorpes a second time he had details

and a plan to share with them.

“When he told us what he wanted to do we were blown away,” said Pam Thorpe.

The store in the show will be located in a town named Peak City. That will work nicely to incorporate other businesses such as Peak City Pharmacy, Peak City Grill and even the Peak City Film Festival into the show.

Demers said once viewers realize these businesses aren't fictional and are located in Apex they should begin preparing for a lot more customers.

“When people find out there is a real Rusty Bucket store I'm going to drive traffic to their website and their store,” said Demers. “Even if the show is only shown locally people will still want to go there.”

“The director (Kevin McDermott) said he doesn't think we really understand how much this show will change our business,” said Mack Thorpe. “He's probably right. I don't think we still comprehend all of it. I guess we could get pretty busy.”

And if one store in the downtown starts pulling in more customers it's a safe bet that other nearby businesses will benefit as well.

“It's really nice for Apex,” said Pam Thorpe. “Between this and the film festival I think it will put Apex on the entertainment map. I'm really excited about it.”