



John O'Neal performs for the pupils.

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ST. PETERSBURG — Children from Shorecrest Preparatory and Lealman Discovery, as well as older students from Tomlinson Adult Center, were introduced last week to characters from the Appalachian Mountains and the cotton fields of the South.

They also received a lesson in cultural diversity and understanding.

About 1,000 Pinellas County public and private school students attended a performance Jan. 10 of *Junebug/Jack*, presented by Class Acts, the Mahaffey Theater's 1994-95 performing arts education program.

The performance is a collaboration of the Roadside Theater of Whitesburg, Ky., in the heart of the Appalachian coal country, and Junebug Productions of New Orleans, La., a company that grew out of the civil rights movement and bases its plays on cultural material from the rural south.

It features Junebug Jabo Jones, who represents southern urban blacks, and Jack, a white Appalachian who lives in poverty with his widowed mother.

Junebug and Jack survive through a sort of inborn wisdom, and their often humorous feats are wonderful stories of wit over power culled from both cultures.

With a minimum of stage props — a wooden bench, a couple of chairs, a table covered with a patchwork quilt, and a fiddle, banjo and guitar — the cast of June-

## About Class Acts

Class Acts presents culturally diverse performances, backstage tours and a Junior Ushers program. Teachers get study guides before performances and they can opt for entertaining classroom games such as *Performing Arts Jeopardy!* and *Theater Etiquette Trivia Time*. For information, call 892-5798.

bug/Jack brought characters of both cultures to the audience of children and adults.

"The day before we went to the play our teacher kind of set up what the play was about and we discussed it in class," said Charlotte Morales, an eighth-grader at Shorecrest.

"I liked how the two different types of people could get their point across ... how they could keep their culture alive through their stories and share with each other. They tried to show how neither culture is wrong, they're just different," she said.

"It was not like your average play ... where the lights go out and the cast comes out as actors," said Dan Levy, also an eighth-grader at Shorecrest. "The music and the way it was presented make you want to pay attention, and it got the point across very well."

"It was nice of them to invite the schools," said Deon Pitts, a seventh-grader who attended the performance with several other Doorways students from Lealman Discovery School in St. Petersburg. Doorways students are designated to receive scholarships from the Pinellas County Education Foundation.

"I thought it was excellent," he said.

His favorite part of the performance was the story about two sons, both named Jack, who leave their mountain home to work for a wealthy landowner known as "the king."

That was Charlotte's favorite, too.

"That was the one the country people told about the boy whose brother got beat by the king," she said. "So he goes to this king to get money to get a doctor for his brother ... and finally he beats the king at his own game and gets the money to get a doctor and save his brother."

A story about a veteran stationed at an Army base in Mississippi after a tour in Vietnam had the most impact on Dan.

"He went to the movies with a black friend," Dan recounted. "They bought tickets and when they went in, the movie attendant told his black friend that he couldn't go in with him. The black friend was offended and they were never as good friends after that. I think I would be offended, too," he added.

Deon had no trouble summing up the message of the performance: "White people and black people really can get along without fighting."