

PRESS KIT 2009



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CONTACT

Joanne "JoJo" LaRiccia - Producer / Host

Office: 617.623.0905

Mobile: 617.710.2848

Email: joanne@jojodreamcart.org



TV SHOW SUMMARY

Emmy Nominated for two years in a row, 2007 & 2008.

In 2002, Joanne “JoJo” LaRiccia founded JoJo’s DreamCart as a children’s educational television show that promotes pro-social values. In July 2008, she developed it into a non-profit organization. The show is dedicated to teaching children ages 7 to 9 that positive thinking is the first step to achieving their dreams.

The show is currently airing on Colours TV (*Multicultural Channel*) on the Satellite Dish Network at 10 AM on Saturday mornings. It has also aired on PBS Rhode Island and over 100 local access TV stations in the US. Each show features an expert in a specific field, including topics in the following categories: Arts, Health, History, Humor, Music, Safety, Science, Self Esteem, Random Acts of Kindness, and Wisdom. Each show is designed to educate children in an interactive manner.

JoJo is the Host and Producer of the show, and her enthusiasm for life seems to rub off on everyone she meets. JoJo is also the Executive Producer. Her goal in life is simply “to spread happiness that is contagious.” Living by this motto, JoJo spreads her passion for life through JoJo’s DreamCart. The show is complimented by its website, www.jojosdreamcart.org, where children can play educational games and view video clips from the show segments on You Tube.

JoJo’s DreamCart is endorsed by the Boston Public School System and Boston Mayor Thomas Menino as a positive learning tool for children. National Grid has been a sponsor.



PRESS ARTICLE

“JOJO” PUSHES HER OWN DREAMS TO REALIZATION

The Somerville News
By Elizabeth Bernardi

In each episode of the children’s show “JoJo’s DreamCart,” Joanne LaRiccia encourages her young audience to pursue their dreams with gusto. And in real life, the show has this month begun airing on Rhode Island PBS, an indication that LaRiccia’s own passion and perseverance are just starting to pay off.

A lifelong Somervillian (aside from her first two years, spent in the North End, and a brief stint during her adulthood in Hawaii), LaRiccia grew up helping to sell wares from her father’s downtown pushcarts. In 1985, the business was passed on to her, and LaRiccia ran her cart outside the New England Aquarium until 2005, logging a total of 35 years. Her knack for performance was long evident.

“I was always singing to my customers,” said LaRiccia, who studied composition and voice at Berklee College of Music. The pushcart, she explained, “was my stage. There’s videos of me all around the world; people would stop and videotape me.”

Her love of performing for a camera started at her pushcart, but the idea for a children’s television show wouldn’t come until 2001, when the advice of customers and family who recommended she perform on television finally sunk in.

The idea: “JoJo’s DreamCart,” an inspirational program designed to encourage children’s natural curiosity and empower them to seek their dreams.

“We inspire kids to believe in themselves,” said LaRiccia, “and if they have a dream, they can live out their dreams. We give them a roadmap.”



In each episode LaRiccìa is joined by four or six local children, who work together to guess the “dream of the day.” One episode, for instance, is dedicated to fish: how they are caught, chosen, prepared and served at Legal Sea Foods. Another episode introduces children to Kung Fu, emphasizing the mental and physical empowerment of the martial art. For each day’s dream, LaRiccìa brings out a “dream expert,” such as Legal Sea Foods owner Roger Berkowitz, to share his or her knowledge.

Then, just as JoJo and the children are getting excited, in walks a “Negative No-No,” a costumed character who arrives to criticize the children’s dreams. Together with the children, JoJo persuades this “No-No” to join the group with enthusiasm as a “Positive Yes-Yes.”

In describing the show, LaRiccìa quickly adds that “JoJo’s DreamCart” emphasizes the work involved in achievement: “You can have whatever you want in this world, but you’ve got to be willing to take the time to learn.”

LaRiccìa herself is an enthusiastic and lifelong learner, and she is constantly considering new show ideas, even as she is being interviewed.

“I think to myself, ‘What did you have to do to be a journalist? What classes did you take? Did this start when you were a child, writing stories?’” This natural curiosity is something “JoJo’s DreamCart” tries to impart, and LaRiccìa’s own real-life efforts to pursue her own dream may well make her the best model for her “Dreamdoers,” as she calls the children who join her each episode.

Developing a show for television is no easy task, LaRiccìa discovered. She taped her pilot in a rented studio, financing the process herself, as she has done all along. (A testament to the benefits of lifelong saving, LaRiccìa credits the long hours she spent working the pushcart and her own thriftiness with her financial ability to focus solely on her dream.) She took the pilot to the 2003 convention for the National Association of Television Producers and Executives (NATPE), and tried to shop it around. She found no takers. “I walked around visiting people in all the booths,” she recalled. “They said, ‘You need a booth of your own.’” She also learned that she would need to have more shows than just the pilot.



So LaRiccia went back to the studio, at Somerville Community Access Television this time, and taped 18 episodes. LaRiccia wears most of the production hats, hosting the show, writing the music, singing much of it herself, and taping all of the b-roll, on-site footage that she says lends credibility to the show's message about exploration.

The only task she has hired out on her production has been the editing, which has been done by professional editor Rachel Eisengart. "I'm too close to the show to edit it," LaRiccia explained. But that does not mean she is uninterested: she is currently taking classes in editing, evidence of her thirst for knowledge of all aspects of production.

The fact that LaRiccia does so much of the production work herself should not be mistaken for a sign that she has no help. She has an entire board of advisors, in fact. Among them is Dr. Paula Stahl, a child psychologist who serves as a sounding board for LaRiccia's ideas and co-starred in an episode dedicated to coping with loss. LaRiccia has a business advisor, as well – a whole team of the positive influences she would encourage anyone pursuing a goal to find.

In 2005, she returned to the NATPE convention, with her batch of shows and several members of her team in tow. "It was extremely difficult," she said. LaRiccia encountered her own "no-nos" at the convention, people who told her that advertisers would not buy time for a show aimed at 7-9-year-olds. But one good thing came of the experience: the Bridges network offered to air her shows. It was a small success, since LaRiccia would give her work to Bridges for free and split the responsibilities of seeking advertisers with the network. But at least the shows would be aired.

Then, last winter, LaRiccia found her first real break: a mutual friend, Rex Trailer, introduced her to Mary Lou Palumbo, of Rhode Island PBS, who had been hired to find more local programming to add to the station's line-up. Palumbo was impressed, both with LaRiccia and with the show. "She is very passionate, for one thing, about what she does," said Palumbo, "and she is very good. She's very creative, she's good with children. She's got quite the imagination."

Beginning this month, the show airs on Sundays at 9 a.m. on Rhode Island PBS, and Palumbo said that "JoJo's DreamCart" will hopefully be the cornerstone of the local children's programming Rhode Island



PBS plans to air. There will be 15 shows in this first fall season, and beginning in February, PBS will seek underwriters to take the financial burden off of LaRiccia, and to finally pay her cast and crew. Meanwhile, LaRiccia has not slowed down even slightly.

On a recent weekend, she spent time filming b-roll footage for upcoming episodes at the site of a home in construction, the progress of which she will be following for at least nine months. Then she was headed out to tape a religious ceremony on Saturday night, to be followed by the taping of a wedding on Sunday. She is used to the long hours – the pushcarts demanded her attention 15-16 hours per day, nine months per year.

When she is not taping her own shows, LaRiccia can be found working with the Somerville Producers Group, a collective of community producers who educate themselves through the practice of producing local programming. It is just one more way LaRiccia can acquire more production experience.

She is not stopping with television, either – LaRiccia is also planning to become more Web-savvy in the near future by taking classes at the Cambridge Center for Adult Education. LaRiccia is determined to exploit all of the resources available to her, anything that might help her pursue her dream.

And what happens when she meets naysayers?

“I am encountering ‘negative no-no’s,’” she said, “and they don’t bother me. I just say, ‘next.’ These things make me stronger, and make me want to persevere even more.”

LaRiccia is convinced that it will only be a matter of time before she reaches her ultimate dream: to bring “JoJo’s DreamCart” to the international stage, inspiring children to achieve whatever goals they dare to dream.

Perhaps LaRiccia herself is the real dream expert.

“JOJO” PUSHES HER OWN DREAMS TO REALIZATION - The Somerville News

By Elizabeth Bernardi



TV SHOW EPISODES

Astronomy

Let's focus our attention on the universe. Galileo takes us on an extraordinary journey through time and space.

Dream Experts: Paul Manning (SpaceManning.net)
David A. Aguilar ([Aspen Skies](http://AspenSkies.com))

Be Strong, Get Along

Bullying is one of the most crucial problems that exist in our playgrounds and schools. We take children through a process called, "Be Strong and Get Along" which will enable them to deflect these situations. This is a serious and compelling show.

Dream Expert: Robin D'Antona (StopBullyingMass.org)
Negative No No: John C. Hume

Boston

The happy history guy takes us on an adventurous trolley ride through Boston to explore our heritage.

Dream Expert: Teddy Galo ([Historic Tours](http://HistoricTours.com))

Exercise

Moving is fun and keeps us strong. Kids can exercise in a gym or in their own back yard. Great tips on how to have fun moving while keeping your body strong! Just use your imagination!

Dream Expert: Theresa McLennan ([Kidz Fun Parties](http://KidzFunParties.com))
Negative No No: John C. Hume



Fish

Fish to Dish - De-lish! How does the Fish get from the ocean onto your plate? The Big Fish, Roger Berkowitz, owner of Legal Seafoods, takes us there, hook, line and sinker. Did you know that fish is brain food?

Dream Expert: Roger Berkowitz ([Legal Seafoods](#))

Negative No No: Dick Syatt

Flying (short film 10:33)

We'll take you through the timeline of how aviation began 100 years ago when aviation took its first flight. Fasten your seat belts, we're about to take off!

Dream Expert: Eric Feron & Vlad ([Eric Feron's Home Page](#))

Giving

Learning to give is to live. It is one of the most important things we can teach our youth.

Dream Experts: Dan & Betsy Nally ([Turkeys4America](#))

Negative No No: John C. Hume

Healing Energy

Susan Stone teach us some interesting techniques on how we can heal ourselves with our own energy. This is a must watch show for the entire family.

Dream Expert: Susan Stone ([Stone Health Center](#))

Negative No No: John C. Hume

I Love Who I Am

Let's celebrate why we are here: to love and be loved. We can achieve this by being kind to ourselves and each other. This is done through the Magic Words, "Please," "Excuse Me," and "Thank You."

Dream Expert: Ida LaRiccia (JoJo's Mom)

Mr. Negative No No: Paul Perz



Indian Classical Dance

Indian Dance is refreshing and light-hearted. It is a fun exercise and poetry in motion. Please join us while we paint our hands and feet! Dance to the rhythm of life.

Dream Expert: Neena Gulati ([Triveni School of Dance](#))

Negative No No: Vic Clay

Karate

Japanese Art of self defense helping kids with focus and discipline.

Dream Expert: Peter McRae ([Okikukai.net](#))

Negative No No: Vic Clay

Kung Fu

Chinese Martial Arts gives us the discipline to move through life with fluidity and joy. Children love Kung Fu!

Dream Expert: John Loupos ([Jade Forest Kung Fu](#))

Negative No No: Vic Clay

Laughter

Laughter, laughter, and more laughter. Life is fun. There's nothing better than a good belly laugh. Check this one out.

Dream Experts: Bari Lee Olevsky and Janet Cormier

Negative No No: Joseph Chiarmonte

Math

Let's all add it all up and see what makes cents and calculate a strategy. Math is used in every facet of life. This essential tool is needed to get by in the real world.

Dream Expert: Carol Findell

Negative No No: Kerrie Jackson



Nutrition

You are what you eat. A stimulating episode on what we put into our bodies affects the way we act and think.

Dream Expert: David Jack ([TEAMWORKS Centers](#))

Negative No No: Vick Clay

Safety

By keeping safe, life can be enjoyed to the fullest.

Dream Expert: Captain Michael Young ([Massachusetts Department of Fire Services](#))

Negative No No: John C. Hume

Tools to Cope with Loss

Tools to Cope with Loss is a personal journey of a family that lost their Grandmother/Mother in the tragedy of 9/11. We give you solutions with the help of Dr. Paula Stahl, a child trauma expert, in a gentle and loving way how to cope with death of someone who is near and dear to you.

Dream Experts: Dr. Paula Stahl & Stephanie Holland-Brodney ([Key.org](#))

Writing

Conveying our thoughts, communicating with words is empowered. We teach children how to become creative and effective writers.

Dream Expert: Logan Manning ([Books of Hope](#))

Negative No No: Vic Clay

Woodcarving

Being a Wood Carver takes lots of practice. David Calvo teaches us how to be a woodcarver using wood, clay, or soap.

Dream Expert: David Calvo ([Calvo Studio](#))

Negative No No: Jeff Mahoney



AWARDS & TESTIMONIALS

AWARDS

2008 - Regional Emmy Award Nominee for Children's Programming

2006 - National Hometown Video Awards for Children's Programs

2007 - Regional Emmy Award Nominee for Children's Programming

2004 - First Place for Outstanding Achievement Children & Youth Program Alliance for Community Media Northeast

TESTIMONIALS

"I recommend Joanne LaRiccia highly and without reservation. I hope you will give her talent and skills every consideration." **Thomas M. Menino Mayor of Boston**

"This generous offer would be another tool for our schools to spread the message of 'JoJo's DreamCart,' which contains lessons about values, self-esteem, careers, science, and other age-appropriate subjects. We would be happy to inform our schools of the television show, including ways teachers can access the show for free, as well as the (Boston) Children's Museum's role."

Anand Vaishnav Chief of Staff Boston Public Schools

"I am writing in support of your production of JoJo's DreamCart, one of the most popular programs ever produced at SCAT (Somerville Community Access Television)." "We look forward to receiving a new season of shows for cablecast on our Channel, which reaches 20,000 households in Somerville. The show serves our mission, which is to enable Somerville residents to produce TV programs that inform, entertain, and inspire. We are proud to be connected with such an outstanding program and wish you all the best in making season two a great success."

Wendy Blom Executive Director, Somerville Community Access TV

"I was thoroughly impressed with her ability to reach out to the children and capture their attention and interest." "Her series offers both children and their families, a much needed addition to their choice of educational programming." **Deborach A. Cyr, School Adjustment Counselor Robin Hood School**



ABOUT JOJO LARICCIA

Written by Lisa Smith

It's the second Saturday of the month, and there's a whole lot of commotion happening at the old firehouse in Union Square. The conference room is stocked with food for cast and crew, camera people are manning their cameras, and the production booth is flush with SCAT members providing direction and technical assistance. Local children are on the studio set, centered around a magical looking pushcart in the clouds. Their eyes are transfixed on Master of Ceremonies Joanne LaRiccia, "JoJo", the producer and star of a children's show called JoJo's Dreamcart.

Born in the North End of Boston, Joanne has lived in Somerville since she was 2 years old. A trained singer and student of Berklee College of Music, anyone who has ever met Joanne knows she can quickly turn everyday life into a musical, spontaneously breaking out into song during the course of a conversation. She says, "I like to spread happiness. It's contagious."

Her first experience at SCAT was in the 1980s when she rented out the SCAT studio facilities to produce a series of music videos. One video, produced by Spotwise Productions, placed second on MTV's Basement Tapes, "I was a few votes away from winning." At one stage in her singing career, Joanne was the highest paid female singer in Boston. And she points out, "I didn't say I was the best singer in Boston, but I was paid the most!"

In 1989, her thoughts turned toward creating a television show for children. Joanne remembers, "It was called Wacky Wanda and her Wacky World of Watchamacallit. Sesame Street liked the idea for my show, but said it was all over the place." She eventually quit the project, but the idea remained in the back of her mind. "In January 2001, I was having a good time playing with my nephews," Joanne recalls, "and my brother said I should have a show for children because he said, 'you really know how to relate to kids.'" On that day she decided to make a children's show happen.

Urged on through advice and support by Rex Trailer, the star of Boomtown, a popular children's show in the 1960s and '70s, Joanne co-produces the show with Trailer and Michael Bavaro. "Michael told me to come to



SCAT,” Joanne says. “He said the show has to start out locally. Michael designed the pushcart, and I made sure it could fit through the doors at SCAT!”

The show’s philosophy, Joanne explains, “is for children to believe in themselves and their dreams. . . to motivate them to develop their self esteem, and their dreams can come true!” JoJo’s Dreamcart is full of positive advice, such as you need to exert 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration and not let those negative “no no’s” in life tell you that you cannot attain your dreams. Of course, there are plenty of catchy tunes written and sung by the star of the show.

When asked about her experiences at SCAT, Joanne says, “I love this place, its spirit. It has a warm feeling, and people are always laughing. It’s also an awesome learning tool. I’m not an actress but I am learning to feel comfortable in front of the camera.” She was also surprised to find such a high level of professionalism from a volunteer crew. It’s obvious SCAT members enjoy working on her show. Because of JoJo’s “mo-jo”, volunteers are lining up to crew on her show.

When asked what her dream in life is, Joanne says, “it is to leave a positive impact on the children of the world.” After all her hard work, her dream is about to come true. Soon JoJo’s Dreamcart will be airing on SCAT and in 19 other cities in the Greater Boston area.



CONTACT INFO

Producer / Host: Joanne "JoJo" LaRiccia

Office: 617.623.0905

Mobile: 617.710.2848

Email: joanne@jojodreamcart.org

P.O. Box 45384 Boston, MA 02145

Associate Producer: Alison Pendleton

Mobile: 617.894.6441

Email: AlisonPendleton@gmail.com

Agent: Ghia Gabriela Szwed-Truesdale

Mobile: 617-997-6554

Email: gggarth83@hotmail.com