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This past winter, I had the best fundraising experience of my life working with Jimmy Tingle. That's saying an awful lot, because I've been raising money for high school drama programs since 1990. I teach Drama at Norwood High School in Norwood MA and like many, if not all, arts programs, we frequently need to raise money for programing for our students. We work through the traditional can drives, car washes, and bake sales. We bring teachers and parents together on stage and laugh and stumble through skits and songs for a few dollars. We sell ads for our programs. All of these things take an immense amount of time and effort with little money raised at the end of it all. The time it takes to raise money in these small ways impacts the time our students have available to work on artistic projects, so fundraising is not always the joyous occasion we might like it to be.

But that dynamic changed the night Jimmy Tingle walked up on our stage to help us send a troupe of students to perform at the Edinburgh Fringe. Jimmy had kindly offered to raise money for us in the past, and I realized this cause would be a perfect fit. Jimmy put together a wonderful evening of comedy, film, and storytelling that I think about every time I walk into our auditorium, and remains a lively topic of conversation among the many who attended.

I've had the good fortune to work with Jimmy Tingle years ago when he owned his wonderful little theatre in the Cambridge/Somerville area. I launched a very successful show there largely due to Jimmy's assistance and his draw. My experience with his professionalism and passion for the theatre made a lasting impression. He provided everything we needed, he was accommodating and helpful and very supportive of the art. I found the same to be true when he brought his one man show to Norwood.

The evening was unbelievable, a truly great show. He opened with some great comedy and political satire. He then screened his documentary on the search for the American Dream for us. He handled some questions and answers and closed with more comedy. The whole evening was just a bit more than two hours and he left everyone on their feet and wanting even more. He stayed after and chatted with students, parents, teachers, and audience members who came from afar to see him. My students loved him. Patrons loved him. Community members, to this day, comment on how enjoyable the evening was. We raised a great deal of money for our students, but more importantly we raised the quality of art and performance in our community. I hope to have an opportunity to bring Jimmy Tingle back to Norwood again very soon.

John Quinn
Director of Drama, Norwood Public Schools