



# Kids in the Biz

**A Hollywood Handbook  
for Parents**

**Troy A. Rutter**

**Foreword by Paul Petersen**



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*Offices and agents throughout the world*

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## FOREWORD

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“Just seeing a kid in show business tells you a lot about the parents” is a show business truism first written by Lonnie Burr, one of the original Mouseketeers. What was true in Lonnie’s day remains the same today . . . with one critical difference: education.

Today’s show business parents have access to a wide variety of information sources and how-to manuals that my mother, for example, would have gladly paid for back in the day. Following the formation of a former kid star “club” called A Minor Consideration in 1990 and a whole series of well-publicized tragedies and equally well-publicized legal advances in the world of working children, learning the nuts and bolts of successfully raising a child in the world of the performing arts suddenly got a whole lot easier.

From actually getting that first headshot to finding a qualified theatrical agent, the ways and means of handling “the business” are now in print and veterans of show business have begun to share their knowledge instead of treating the lessons they learned (and mistakes they made) as privately held business secrets.

I cannot stress highly enough the crucial role that education plays in the lives of both our talented children and our savvy stage parents. Education is a continuing process, from getting started to overseeing the dozens of financial opportunities a successful breakout performance can create, and it is a wise parent who seeks every possible means of educating himself about protecting his growing child.

There is more to show business than meets the eye, and the balancing act all parents must play means they have to thoughtfully weigh and

carefully measure the often competing pressures of character development, age-appropriate behaviors, talent enhancement, scholastic performance, and money management.

Troy Rutter has laid out a road map for the parent who knows she must never stop the process of learning about the business her child finds so appealing. Common sense will tell you that in the rapidly changing world of developing children and expanding business opportunities, keeping yourself informed is the surest way to protect your child.

Always remember that “too much of a good thing” is reality when it comes to show business. A solid foundation and continuous self-examination help young actors and their parents avoid most of the pitfalls and traps of a very seductive undertaking. Pay attention and always have an exit strategy.

Good luck.

—Paul Petersen  
President and Founder of A Minor Consideration  
*www.minorcon.org*

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# INTRODUCTION

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If you are reading this, chances are either you are already located in one of the performing arts capitals, or you are getting ready to pack up the car and head out to the Wild Wild West. In the first case, great! You are in one of the best places to begin your child's career. In the case of the latter, however . . . hold on! Don't go dreaming of strawberry smoothies just yet.

There are opportunities for young performers starting out in the business everywhere you look, even in your own backyard. I'm from Iowa, a place that you would not expect to be the cornerstone of *any kind* of Hollywood production.

Wrong.

While in Iowa, I saw an enormous amount of opportunities as a young aspiring actor. There were local casting calls for *The Bridges of Madison Country*, *Field of Dreams*, *Twister*, and the TV movie of the week with our very own Tom Arnold, *The Woman Who Loved Elvis*. Quite a bit of work for the middle of nowhere! When you talk about Iowan actors, who can forget Elijah Wood, John Wayne, and Ashton Kutcher?

But it does not stop there. Television is also a huge market in small communities. *Rescue 911* frequented my area. Additionally, there are several local commercials to be found. I remember working through college at the local ABC affiliate and just by chance asking if they needed a different voice for some commercials. They jumped at the opportunity to provide yet one more voice for clients!

On an even smaller scale, there is cable public access television. What could be better than showing off your child's talent on public

access? Some programs are even syndicated around the country, giving even more exposure.

Aside from television and movies, there are also local theatre opportunities. From high school to college to community theatre to the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis—opportunities abound to practice your craft *everywhere*. Plus there are movies and television shows shot on location everywhere around the country.

As I mentioned, there is one key thing to remember when starting to seek a career for your child in the entertainment field, or “the industry,” or simply “the biz”: Acting is not just television and movies. Sure, it may be more rewarding to see your child’s name on a movie poster in thousands of theatres around the world, or see his name come across the television during the movie of the week, but the craft of acting is what it is all about.

So keep an open mind and your head from the clouds. It is a lot of work. But if you and your child are willing to make it work, the rewards are out there for the taking.

In the immortal words of Walt Disney—

THINK, BELIEVE, DREAM, DARE!