

LAZYTOWN' CREATOR WANTS TO MOVE KIDS

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There's something that Magnus Scheving wants kids to do after they watch his new show, "LazyTown," on Nick Jr. He wants them to get up and go. And keep going.

"Kids are the same wherever you go," Scheving told the Daily News in a telephone interview from Iceland, where he lives and produces the show.

"There are two things they understand," he said. "Movement and affection. So if kids are happy, they actually jump."

Scheving should know. He's a two-time European champion in aerobics, an author, an entertainer and the father of three.

"LazyTown," launching Monday at 10:30 a.m., is a mix of live action, puppets and state-of-the-art computer generated animation. Scheving (pronounced Shkaring) plays the superhero Sportacus. And like every good guy, Sportacus has an arch enemy, which in this case is Robbie Rotten. What's at stake in LazyTown is the health and well-being of its young residents.

"LazyTown" is the latest program in Nickelodeon's campaign to get its target audience to be more active. For example, on Oct. 2, Nickelodeon will go dark for three hours as a way to get kids outdoors.

But will the kids follow their perpetually up leader Sportacus?

Iceland has been the de facto test market for the show, said Scheving, who began there with a 1991 book, "Go, Go Lazy Town," that has spawned a spin-off industry in publishing, live theater and radio.

"It came to me because I was traveling around the world in the fitness circle," said Scheving, 40. "I also worked a lot with the government [on behalf of] children and with parents and caregivers about how to raise children to live happier lives."

Scheving's work got him wondering: Could he somehow come up with role model who would fight for health and well-being and not be boring?

After almost 4,000 lectures over an eight-year-period, Scheving came to a couple of conclusions.

"Everybody is going through the same thing," he said, noting parents around the world have the same concerns. "You want them to be educated. You want them to be safe. You don't want them to hurt other kids. You don't want them to eat sugar all the time , etc. etc."

Which is why "LazyTown" is about motivation, not exercise.

"And 'motivation,' what is that?" said Scheving. "We call it one word. 'Go.' And people say 'Go where?'"

To which Scheving says he always responds: "Go anywhere."

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