

# Huntington native takes a spin on the 'Wheel'



Courtesy of Callfon Productions, Inc.

Huntington native Jim Thornton works for an all news radio station in Los Angeles, but is serving as the announcer for "Wheel of Fortune" throughout January and some of February. He is pictured here with Vanna White and Pat Sajak.

By **ANGELA HENDERSON-BENTLEY**

For The Herald-Dispatch

If you think the voice that's been introducing Pat Sajak and Vanna White this month on "Wheel of Fortune" sounds familiar, that's because it may very well be someone you know.

The voice belongs to Huntington native Jim Thornton. Thornton is filling in as the announcer on "Wheel" (which airs locally weeknights at 7 p.m. on WSAZ) for the remainder of January and for a few episodes in February.

"The people at 'Wheel' are

wonderful and really, really nice," Thornton said. "They have welcomed me with such open arms."

Thornton's popularity as the afternoon news anchor for KNX 1070, a major all-news station in the Los Angeles area, helped him land the job.

"I thought I'd be crazy not to try it," he said.

Thornton is just one of the people "Wheel" has used to fill in for the show's longtime announcer, Charlie O'Donnell, who passed away in November.

"I was very careful not to just be coming in and taking over,"

he said. "I made it clear to them I'm just looking at this as a few days. Like 'Fantasy Island.' You get to be someone else and have a ball and then you go home.

"I'm really lucky and blessed to have gotten to do it," he said. "I hope it gives people in Huntington some pride."

Thornton said he's excited to be doing something the people back home can actually hear and relate to, but it's likely people have heard his work and just didn't know it. He's voiced talking abdominal muscles for Old Spice, a radio announcer

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# Wheel

■ Continued from 3C

in the video game, "Mafia II," and for two years, he was the ringside announcer, Johnny Gomez, for MTV's "Celebrity Deathmatch." But his biggest claim to fame is probably as a voice in the Disney/Pixar film, "Monsters, Inc." Thornton voices the commercial in the beginning of the movie. He also narrates the training video in the DVD's special features and can be heard in the "Monsters, Inc." attractions at both Disneyland and Walt Disney World.

"I'm just glad to be getting these opportunities," Thornton said.

Voice work and radio were what Thornton has wanted to do since the age of 5 when at Huntington's Trinity Episcopal Church he was able to hear his voice through a microphone for the first time.

"When I heard my voice

come back to me from the speakers, I was entranced," he said. "It's the power of hearing your voice come back at you. It's what spurred me."

Thornton graduated from Huntington High School in 1983 and then moved to Los Angeles in 1984. Thornton, who lives with his wife, Sue, and their 13-year-old son, Sam, in Tujunga, Calif., tries to visit the Tri-State at least twice a year.

"Huntington's always going to be home to me. I have a home here (in Tujunga), but it's not where my real roots are," Thornton said.

It is possible that the people at "Wheel" could call again, but if they don't, Thornton is just happy to have had this experience that he could share with his hometown.

"It's a great thing to get to represent our fine city. It was a great place for a beginning and to get my education," he said. "I leave a little bit of Huntington wherever I go."