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Robert Baker of Clark Pest Control talks about the ad campaign, "Yucky Bug." Hundreds of people from the area volunteered to be in the Clark commercial. Pictured on the screen is Gabriel Turnbeaugh, 3, of Stockton, who was chosen for the commercial because of his song, "Yucky Bug." (Brian Feulner/News-Sentinel)

**A 'yucky' star is born**  
**Grape Festival auditions yield new commercials for Clark Pest Control**

By Marc Lutz  
 News-Sentinel Staff Writer  
 Updated: Friday, April 10, 2009 6:24 AM PDT  
 Comments (No comments posted.)

Do you know the Yucky Bug song? If you don't, you soon will, and 3-year-old Gabriel Turnbeaugh will teach it to you.

Next week, Clark Pest Control will start running TV commercials featuring Turnbeaugh singing the song his mom wrote. He auditioned for the company at last year's Grape Festival.

The commercial sprang out of an idea one of Clark's employees had, after a friend wanted to know how he could be in one of the company's TV spots.

"People would say, 'How do I get into your commercials?'" said Robert Baker, the company's operations manager. After so many inquiries, Baker said they had the idea to hold auditions at the Lodi Grape Festival, putting the winner into their next ad campaign. The only requirement was to include the famous slogan, "Clark, we need you!"

The response was overwhelming.

"When we started on this, we didn't know what we'd get, so we didn't know how it would play out," Baker said. What they got was Turnbeaugh and a lot of other talent. But the towheaded little boy with the smiling eyes and pink cheeks almost didn't get his chance at fame.

Gabriel Turnbeaugh's grandmother, Sylvia Coelho, read about the auditions in the paper and urged his mother, Kristan Turnbeaugh of Stockton, to have him audition.

"She said, 'Do something cute.' I really procrastinated," Kristan Turnbeaugh said, adding she had no idea what she could have Gabriel Turnbeaugh do. On the way to the Grape Festival, she started thinking about how children would react to bugs, leading her to use the word 'yucky,' and to realize she would have him sing. Kristan Turnbeaugh came up with:

"Spiders are yucky!

Termites are yucky!

Roaches are yucky!

Ants are yucky!

Who do you call when you got bugs?

Clark, we need you! Clark, we need you!"

Kristan Turnbeaugh taught her son the song in 20 minutes, just in time for his big debut. Not one to shy away from the limelight, Gabriel Turnbeaugh belted out the song while swinging a big, fuzzy, stuffed spider around by the arm.

"He's a serious ham-and-a-half," Kristan Turnbeaugh said. "Not shy at all."



This is a screen shot from the new Clark Pest Control commercial featuring Gabriel Turnbeaugh, 3.

Clark put the auditions on their Web site the Monday after the Grape Festival ended, and it received so many hits from people wanting to see them that the demand crashed their servers.

Though there were a handful of top choices, Baker said, it all came down to Gabriel Turnbeaugh. Through production costs and air time, Clark spent about the same producing the ad as they would a regular commercial. It's an advertising approach that harkens back to the days when companies would do "man on the street" interviews. Though the production value was lower, it saved on advertising budgets.

But, Baker points out, it's not about the cost.

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of Stockton who sings in the ad.  
(Brian Feulner/News-Sentinel)

"We try to reach out and be a part of the community," Baker said.

The Yucky Bug commercial has been airing in San Diego, San Luis Obispo and Santa Maria for awhile, and it will begin airing in the Lodi market next week. So far, Baker said, it's created "quite a buzz." Baker said a father called saying his kids were singing the song, and he wondered if he could get a copy of the song on a CD to surprise his children. Clark burned a copy and sent it off to him.

When Gabriel Turnbeaugh saw the commercial, Kristan Turnbeaugh said she didn't know if he fully comprehended what he was watching.

"He sees himself on TV and says, 'He's funny!' I said, 'You realize that's you, right?' and he says, 'I know.'"

For his hard work, Clark Pest Control rewarded Gabriel Turnbeaugh with gift certificates for Toys "R" Us and Chuck E. Cheese.

Clark will hold auditions next year, expanding into other markets they serve and allowing people from across California to participate.

And though the media attention and spotlight can be a little overwhelming, Kristan Turnbeaugh and her husband Stephen take pride in their "little ham."

"He's going to become the Free Credit Report guys," Kristan Turnbeaugh joked.

To view Gabriel Turnbeaugh's Yucky Bug commercial for Clark Pest Control, visit [www.clarkpest.com/clark\\_commercials.html](http://www.clarkpest.com/clark_commercials.html).

Contact Business Editor Marc Lutz at [marcl@lodinews.com](mailto:marcl@lodinews.com).

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*Rich Hanner*  
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