

Teacher says there's no Santa; parents outraged

RENTON, Wash. (AP) — Scrooge is alive and well and teaching elementary school in this south Seattle suburb, at least in the view of some parents whose kids were informed in class that there is no Santa Claus.

Gym teacher David Henry contended he was just telling it like it is, parents said. But he's in hot water for his disclosure Monday to the children, some of whom are in kindergarten.

"The line of parents outside the principal's office this morning was amazing," one mother said Tuesday. "The line of people looking for Mr. Henry was even more amazing."

Some of the angry parents wanted their children removed from Henry's class at Fairwood Elementary School, the *Valley Daily News* reported Thursday in a copyright story.

Others believe Henry should leave.

The mother interviewed Tuesday, who did not want her name used, said she had asked to have her daughter pulled from Henry's physical education class.

"He claims he did nothing wrong, that he told them the truth and we're the ones lying to them," she said. "He should be teaching somersaults, not Santa."

Henry, who has taught gym at Fairwood for 12 years,

did not return repeated phone calls to his home and the school this week.

Kent School District spokeswoman Judy Parker acknowledged there have been complaints, but said Thursday the matter will be handled at Fairwood and that Principal Audrian Fowler "will investigate both sides of the issue and will take any action she needs to take."

Fowler did not return a telephone call seeking comment.

Jill Springer was visiting her son Christopher's kindergarten class Monday when the students returned from gym. They were unusually quiet, she said, and it seemed something was wrong.

Later, her son confronted her.

"He said, 'Well, now I know the truth. You and Dad are Santa.' I asked who told him. He said the gym teacher," Springer said.

"There's been quite an uproar," she said. "I think the majority of this community wants their kids to believe in Santa. Nobody has the right to rape our kids of that belief."

Parent Rob Robson said the biggest problem is the children's confusion.

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— Jill Springer
Mother

"They know parents don't lie and teachers don't lie. Then they're put in the position of trying to decide who did what," he said.

One teacher did what she could in the way of damage control the next day, said a little girl's parent, who did not want her name used.

"Her teacher was wonderful. She read them a story about people who are believers, who can hear the bells ringing. Those who aren't believers don't hear the bells.

"My daughter said to me, 'You know, Mom, Mr. Henry doesn't hear the bells.'"

Man faces charges for beheading family cat

DANVILLE, Calif. (AP) — A 20-year-old Danville man has been charged with cruelty to animals for allegedly beheading his family's cat with a meat cleaver during a night of heavy drinking, according to police.

Ryan Robbins could be sentenced to one year in prison and fined up to \$20,000 if convicted on the misdemeanor charges.

Three weeks ago, while his parents were on vacation, Robbins and about 15 friends met at his house to party, the police report said. Robbins said he consumed five or six

beers and was "crushed" when his attentions turned to the family cat, Jingles.

Visitors yelled, smiled and cheered as Robbins twisted the cat's head, then walked to the kitchen sink and cut it off with a cleaver, said reports filed in Walnut Creek-Danville Municipal Court.

Robbins then picked up the body and looked at it "emotionless ... like you or I would look at dirty dishes," one witness told police.

He placed the head and body in a trash bag

in a neighbor's garbage can, said Sergeant Rich Woolard of the Danville police.

Police learned of the attack when Robbins' sister reported it, Woolard said. They charged him Tuesday.

Robbins told police he was surprised the incident became a criminal matter, according to police reports. He said he was "in the wrong crowd, doing the wrong thing" at the time.

Visitors yelled, smiled and cheered as Robbins twisted the cat's head.

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