



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

From left Max Pittman, Savana Petty, and Ron Marneky make their way across the rock wall at Oakdale Heights.

## FINDING THEIR GRIP

Students at Oakdale climb their way to fitness fun on new wall

By Jolene Guzman  
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Max Pittman was determined to get to the end of the rock wall.

A first-grader at Dallas' Oakdale Heights Elementary School, he carefully picked out his route on the wall — with some help from Oakdale Heights Principal Caleb Harris.

"Move your right hand here," Harris said pointing to a grip right above Max's head. "There you go. Nice adjustment."

In a few seconds, Max found his way to the end of wall and jumped down triumphantly.

Mission accomplished. When asked if it was difficult Max said "no," but added he has fun using the wall during class.

Max's favorite part? "Just climbing," naturally.

The rock wall, installed earlier this spring, is the newest addition to the school's physical education classes.

It's proving popular with the students, even rivaling the perennial favorite climbing rope among the fitness stations in the gym, Harris said.

It's not a vertical challenge due to safety concerns — no harnesses are required — but it still tests students' coordination and strength as they "climb" from side to side.

The wall has yellow, green and blue colored grips, which can add to the difficulty depending on the task, and two corners to navigate.

Physical Education teacher Jon Petersen can

add temporary obstacles — such as hula-hoops to crawl through — or challenge students to use only certain colored grips to find their way across to make the activity even more interesting.

Harris said he began working on building the rock wall after visiting Independence Elementary School in Independence for his daughter's gymnastics class.

The school already had a wall, and he thought it might make for a fun fitness station to add something similar to Oakdale's gym.

He applied for a "gym enhancement" grant from Lowe's to pay for the installation.

With donated engineering by Dallas resident Greg Locke and painting by local artist Kev Kohler, the rock wall was completed by the

time students returned from spring break in March.

Petersen and Harris know first-hand the types of obstacles the kids are facing on the wall; they tested it themselves before opening it to students to make sure the degree of difficulty was appropriate for the age group. Harris said it's not as easy as it may look.

"There was some quality testing," Harris said, smiling.

Harris and Petersen already have phase II of the rock wall in mind. They would like to expand the wall at least 20 feet to give more students a chance to climb across.

Now, only four students can use the wall at one time.

"We would like to be able to have eight on it at once," Harris said. "That is the goal."

## SCHOOL NOTES

### Martin, Ilg to retire from ACES

MONMOUTH — Sue Martin and Lori Ilg will celebrate retirement from 3:30 to 5 p.m. on Thursday at the Ash Creek Elementary School library.

Celebrate their lifelong commitment to the teaching profession by sharing stories, laughter and companionship. Refreshments will be served.

For more information: ACES, 503-606-9016.

### KVCS students to raise money

KINGS VALLEY — Kings Valley Charter School's high school foreign language class is partnering with Zaycon Fresh to raise money for student trips to Italy and France in 2016.

Zaycon Fresh offers deliveries or pickup of fresh meats, including chicken, lean ground beef, hickory smoked bacon, pork sausage, frozen beef patties, breaded chicken strip fritters, frozen chicken drum sticks and more.

To sign up go to [www.zayconfresh.com](http://www.zayconfresh.com), put KVCS in the referral box and foreign language program will receive \$10 for new customers and \$1 on future orders.

For more information: [tsprague@kvschool.org](mailto:tsprague@kvschool.org).

### Willis earns Rotary scholarship

INDEPENDENCE — Michael Willis, a graduating senior at Central High School from Independence, has been named the winner of the 2015 Monmouth-Independence Rotary Club's scholarship. Willis is one of 17 students who applied for the \$1,000 award.

Willis has been a member of the Academic All-Stars and the Competitive Math Team at Central as well as a leader in the United Nations and the Rotary Interact clubs.

He has assisted with the YMCA Nite Court and the Hop & Heritage Festival, as well as working on the Ford Family Pathways Committee. Willis also recently graduated from Polk County's Search and Rescue Academy.

Willis plans to major in English at Portland State University.

The Rotary Scholarship, which has been offered for many years by the local Rotary Club, is awarded annually to a student who has excelled academically, demonstrated leadership among peers, and has provided volunteer service in the community.

### IES kids raise money for upgrades

INDEPENDENCE — Students in Brian Ross' fourth-grade class at Independence Elementary School are raising money to buy Boogie Boards for the school.

The students, Teo, Jake, Peyton and Maritza, said their goal is to raise \$700 to buy 35 boards, which will replace the personal white boards used in class now.

Boogie Boards are not white boards, the students said, but rather technological devices that help them take notes and do math problems.

To donate or for more information: IES front office, 503-838-0030.

### Lindley to graduate from Willamette

SALEM — Quinn Lindley a 2011 Central High School graduate will graduate from Willamette University with a Bachelor of Arts majoring in politics. Quinn was a member of the cross-country and track team all four years at Willamette.

He also interned for the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Oregon Legislature for Senator Chuck Thompson. Quinn plans to seek employment with the Federal government after graduation.

See more School Notes and Academic Honors on Page 14A



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