

**Toy gun
found at
LaCreole**

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — A juvenile was referred for disorderly conduct after bringing a fake gun to LaCreole Middle School on Dec. 12.

Students reported to school officials that there was a possible gun in a locker at the school at about 10 a.m. on Dec. 12.

“Our school heard about a potential weapon in the school,” Superintendent Michelle Johnstone said. “Within six minutes, we had secured the toy and secured the student. Our first job was to secure the weapon and secure the kids.”

Some parents of LaCreole students are upset with how the district handled the report of a possible weapon on school grounds, and have gone to Dallas Police Department to discuss it at least twice, according to police logs. School administrators called Dallas Police at 11:36 a.m.

Lt. Jerry Mott said the goal of every responder, from school administration and staff to police officers, is to keep children safe.

“When staff have an immediate opportunity to secure the weapon to make students safe, that is the right action,” he said. “The school did exactly what they should have. It would have taken us longer to get a 911 call than the school staff securing the fake gun and securing the student. They handled it the quickest way possible, efficiently as possible.”

Some parents are concerned also with the aftermath of the event, saying their children are being harassed by other students for “telling” on the student who brought the toy gun.

See SCHOOL, Page 5A



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Keagan Graves, 8, delivers his collection of donated toys to the Polk Resource Center on Monday.

MISTLETOE FOR A CAUSE

Keagan, 8, raises cash to buy toys for kids in need this Christmas

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Keagan Graves took the baton from his older brother, Collin, and now he’s the adorable boy peddling mistletoe during the holiday season.

Like Collin before him, he’s raising money to buy toys for children who might not receive gifts this Christmas. His big brother started the project seven years ago at the age of 10.

“When I saw some kids who were sad, I said, ‘Don’t worry. I’ll sell some mistletoe and buy you some toys,’” said Keagan, 8.

Keagan began selling handmade mistletoe bunches around town and through Facebook in early December, and raised more than \$225 in his first few days.

“When I was at school, I saw somebody who was sad, and they wanted a present,” Keagan said. “I’m going to buy everybody a present.”

His ambition is as big as his heart, said Keagan’s



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Keagan Graves displays a few finished mistletoe bundles. He took over his brother’s project selling the plant to raise money for toys for children in need.

mom, Julie Graves.

“I’m so happy. On top of being blessed with two beautiful children, they have such beautiful hearts,” Julie Graves said. “You don’t see kids these days that want to give back and I’m blessed I have two.”

She said Keagan’s gen-

made well over \$500,” Julie Graves said. “Keagan told him he’s going to make more.”

He’s off to a good start, says older brother Collin Graves, now 17, admitting the wide-eyed Keagan might have an advantage over him if the two were to go head-to-head now.

“It’s pretty cool, honestly. I’ve gotten bigger and it’s easier for him to sell it than me,” he said. “If we were both selling it, he would sell more than me, I’m pretty sure.”

Saturday, Julie and Keagan made a trip to Toys R Us to purchase toys to donate to Salvation Army.

Between Keagan’s gift for selling the \$1 bundles and his mom’s “couponing” prowess, the two hope to deliver a haul to brighten Christmas morning for children in need.

Julie and Keagan coordinated with Nicole Bats, the Salvation Army’s Polk County Social Services Representative, to find recipients for the toys.

See TOYS, Page 3A

**IN
YOUR
TOWN**

DALLAS

Letter to Santa found; Dallas girl’s dreams filled.

»Page 3A

FALLS CITY

Domenica Protheroe retires from Falls City clerk.

»Page 2A

PERRYDALE

Perrydale FFA students collect roughly 350,000 pounds of food through Food For All.

»Page 7A

POLK COUNTY

Judge Rafael Caso replaces Sally Avera.

»Page 2A

RICKREALL

Rickreall Christmas Pageant costumes on display at Polk County Museum.

»Page 6A

SPORTS

Dallas wrestling places first at the Liberty Invitational.

»Page 12A

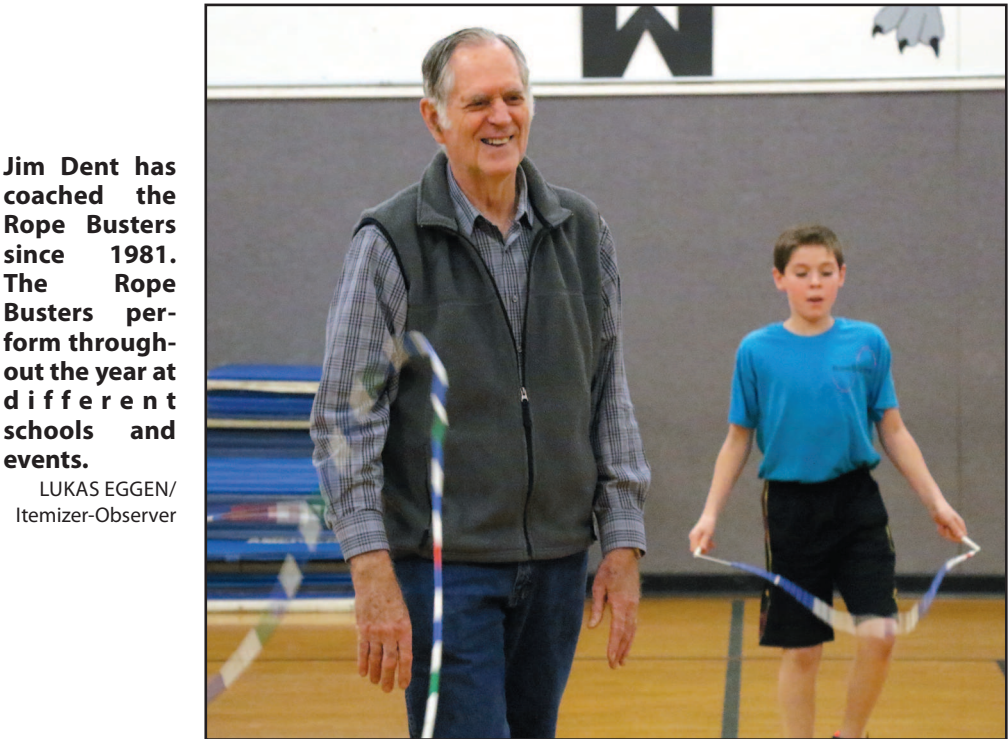
EDUCATION

Perrydale schools received a grant to remodel its workshops.

»Page 14A

Sign up for our newsletter

Get a peek at events coming up over the weekend, including what to expect, weather-wise. Sign up at polkio.com.



Jim Dent has coached the Rope Busters since 1981. The Rope Busters perform throughout the year at different schools and events.
LUKAS EGGEN/
Itemizer-Observer

Dedication skips through youth

Jim Dent’s lessons go deeper than jumping rope

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — All it takes is a hop, skip or a jump.

Jump roping is something most people learn as a kid.

Few remember lasting lessons from it.

That’s not the case for those who have taken part in Rope Busters under Jim Dent’s direction. Kids may come for the fun, but they’ve left with so much more.

“There’s so much he teaches us,” Lynn Gumpinger, a senior at Dallas High School, said. “We’re one big family. (Jim and his wife Lola) are two of my favorite people. They’ve earned the love of this community.”



Jim has been a fixture in the Dallas School District for decades.

Trenda Locke was paired with Jim during her student teaching. It was immediately apparent that he was not like any other teacher she had encountered.

“He was a teacher that, though he could be pretty stern, had a good connection with the kids,” Locke said.

“They knew when he was joking. He could be tough, but also had a good way of being light-hearted with them. He had high expectations for everyone and ran a tight ship.”

See DENT, Page 5A

THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK

<p>wed</p> <p>With just five days until Christmas, find that perfect last-minute gift one of our great, local merchants. Beats traffic every time.</p> <p>Partly cloudy Hi: 45 Lo: 27</p>	<p>thu</p> <p>Make gingerbread houses at the Monmouth Senior Center with Saron Kay Woods — grandchildren welcome. 2 p.m. \$3</p> <p>Partly sunny Hi: 41 Lo: 30</p>	<p>fri</p> <p>While you’re out driving to look at Christmas light displays, snap a picture and send it to the <i>Itemizer</i> for our weekly newsletter.</p> <p>Partly sunny Hi: 40 Lo: 25</p>	<p>sat</p> <p>Feeling under the weather? The Polk Community Free Clinic is open to the uninsured and under-insured. 7 to 11 a.m. Free.</p> <p>Partly sunny Hi: 39 Lo: 23</p>	<p>sun</p> <p>Follow Santa’s Christmas Eve journey through NO-RADSanta.org. Alternately, Google Earth will also track the elf’s adventures.</p> <p>Partly cloudy Hi: 38 Lo: 25</p>	<p>mon</p> <p>Merry Christmas from our families to yours. Our office will be closed today to celebrate. Please note earlier deadlines on Page 2A.</p> <p>Showers Hi: 40 Lo: 31</p>	<p>tue</p> <p>Kwanzaa, a seven-day celebration honoring African culture and traditions, begins today and runs through Jan. 1.</p> <p>Showers Hi: 42 Lo: 30</p>
---	---	--	---	--	--	--