



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Jim Dent gives a few Rope Busters some tips on Monday.

Dent

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Even after “retiring” in 2000, he has served as a substitute teacher and brought some of his clock collection to share with students.

“He has really varied interests,” Locke said. “He’ll do these little classes. He’s into gardening and brings in plants to share with teachers. He’s supportive of kids who are Rope Busters, going to their events when he can. He’s done a lot for this district.”

So much so that the gymnasium at Lyle Elementary School will be named in his honor.

Perhaps the thing he’s most known for now, the Rope Busters, wasn’t something he thought he’d be doing to this day.

The Rope Busters began in 1981, after Jim attended a physical education conference.

“A lady there had a team, and I got to talking to her,” he said. “She said let me come to your school and perform. I thought, ‘Hey, I could do this.’”

It wasn’t long before the American Heart Association contacted him to get involved, and the Rope Busters team was off and running.

It’s not uncommon for the team to attract around 100 kids each year. The kids find a joy in the simplicity, yet challenge that jump rope provides, Jim said. He’s also out to promote things that he knows parents want to be instilled.

“Behavior, responsibility, I try to promote those things,” Jim said. “I expect them to be responsible. I expect them to work. I also think it basically comes down to a three-lettered word — fun. If they are having fun, then they are going to put in the work.”

Tiffany Crishman has seen a noticeable difference in her daughter, Audrey.

Seeing the thrill of performing and mastering a new trick never gets old, Dent said.

“They will tell me that they can’t do something,” Dent said. “Then I say show me what you can do. I give them a few pointers and all of a sudden, they try something, and they say, ‘Hey, I think I did it.’ I say I think you did too. Now, do it again.”

Many jumpers stay in the program for multiple years, Dent said. Gumpinger was a regular member until her sophomore year and still visits the team once in a while — a testament to what she took away from her time with the team.

“You gain confidence in yourself,” she said. “He makes you work with different people, so you get to know new people and learn to work with all kinds of people. The older kids be-

come mentors to the younger kids. You learn how to take care of people. We even work with college kids sometimes and we see how to communicate with older people when we wouldn’t have had that opportunity elsewhere.”

Jim is quick to point toward others for the success of the program.

“The secret to the success of the program isn’t me; it’s not the kids; it’s the parents,” Jim said. “They teach kids the right things. If it weren’t for the parents I don’t think the program would grow.”

To those who he affected, the real difference maker is clear.

“I love the environment he creates,” Gumpinger said. “You can tell he really cares about each kid.”

School

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Johnstone said she would hope that parents would call the school or district office and keep them in the loop about those concerns.

Mott said as the investigation continues, there is going to be a difference in accounts in the case.

“The firsthand accounts of this are going to look different,” Mott said. “The perceptions based on some of the non-firsthand accounts and the non-witness accounts are probably creating circumstances that are creating more anxiety.”

ity.”

Johnstone said counselors from Polk County Mental Health are on site to support anyone who has anxiety, concerns or fears.

Some toy guns are created to look identical to real ones. That was not the case here, Mott said, as this gun was made with clear plastic and a clearly identifiable orange tip.

Regardless, district policy prohibits weapons in schools, including replicas of weapons, unless granted prior building principal approval for certain circum-

stances or school-related activities.

Mott said this toy gun could not be considered a replica.

This case remains under investigation.

“I appreciate Dallas Police Department because we have a great partnership,” Johnstone said.

Mott said the Dallas PD and Dallas School District have conducted training and safety drills together for at least a decade.

“We do have a long history with our schools, and a long partnership with our schools,” he said.

Wishing you a Happy Holiday Season!

— The Polk County Itemizer-Observer

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