

COMMUNITY

SCHOOL:

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ting, the district is allowing students to get a head start on learning they might not otherwise have had, Liscom said. Currently, the Stanfield preschool has 11 students who are working to learn their numbers, letters, sounds and colors, while also familiarizing them with the classroom environment.

The same is happening in Umatilla and Echo with

their preschool programs, as well as the once-a-month preschool program that Hermiston offers to its families.

Since Umatilla started its preschool program last year and instituted a partnership program with the rest of the preschools in the region, the district saw increases in student performance across the board, based on data presented from its Kindergarten Readiness Assessment this year, Superintendent Heidi Sipe said.

“One of the things that

we noticed is that in each and every category measured this year, we had higher growth than the state average growth,” she said. “We know that our preschool partnerships are definitely having an impact.”

All numbers in Umatilla were also higher than those reported from last year’s kindergarten class. Sipe said she hopes to continue to see numbers increase as the district maintains the preschool options and partnerships available.

“We are always trying to close the gap between our students and the rest of the state,” she said. “If we are still trying to catch up to a higher rate, we know we will have work to do.”

Liscom said that Elgin, which has had a preschool program for a few years now, has KRA data that is well above the state average.

“We are wanting to share the success in the region and then help other districts or other community agencies,” she said. “It’s helping

people to replicate what is successful.”

TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

Liscom said one way districts can share their successes is through the Blue Mountain Early Learning hub, which provides training opportunities for teachers and resources for families. Liscom is the current chairman of the hub’s governance board and helps provide direction and policy for the overall program.

“One of our kindergarten teachers, one of our second-grade teachers and our preschool teacher meet with Echo’s kindergarten teacher and preschool teacher once a month to talk about what is working in their classroom and what they need help with,” she said.

Then every couple of months, inservice training opportunities are extended to districts across the region so teachers can meet and talk about what is working and isn’t working overall, she said.

RESCUE:

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has years of experience with rope rescues from his former job as an emergency preparedness manager at the Umatilla Chemical Depot, had trained Marcum in rope rescues when he served on a rescue team at the depot in the past. Although neither of the men had performed a rope rescue to save a pet, both knew they were capable of the task.

“When we got out there, we made contact with the dog owner, and you could tell that he really loved his dog,” Stewart said. “We were all of the same impression that it was that man’s best friend. I called in on the radio and said this isn’t going to be a very difficult rescue at all. With all the training that Cody (Marcum) and I have done in the past, it really wasn’t a big deal. From my point of view, it was kind of two-fold: It was good practice, and we got to save a man’s best friend.”

Stewart set up the rigging and ropes and secured Marcum in a harness before lowering him over the side of the cliff. Stanfield volunteers assisted in the rope rescue: Chandi Walker operated a separate safety line, and Tristan Walker relayed communications between Marcum and Stewart.

Marcum rappelled about 30 feet down to the ledge and said the dog welcomed him when he arrived. He secured Suzy, and Stewart pulled the pair back up by hand, using a five-to-one mechanical advantage pulley system.

“The dog was in good spirits,” Marcum said. “It had an eye injury, but, other

than that, the dog was in good shape. It was fairly simple, a fairly easy rescue for us. It took longer to set up and take down than it did to go over the edge and pull it up. That’s what we’re trained to do, and it’s nice to be able to put it to good use and show people that we’re actually able to do it safely.”

Bryan was relieved and excited to see his dog, but Suzy was even more excited to be back on flat land.

“When they hauled her up, she was probably the happiest dog in the county,” Bryan said. “She was happy to see anybody at all. She tried to jump right in this guy’s arms, but she was kind of in shock from the fall and hitting her head.”

The UCSO deputy carried Suzy to his patrol car and tried to warm her in front of the heater as he drove the dog and Bryan back to the lot where his vehicle was parked. Bryan transported Suzy to Hermiston Veterinary Clinic, where a veterinarian was standing by to treat her.

Suzy’s right eye was injured during the fall, and although she may lose vision in that eye, she was otherwise unharmed. Bryan said he was grateful people came together to help save his dog.

“It was excellent,” he said. “You couldn’t ask for any better service. Everybody was just great.”

Marcum and several others who participated in the rescue said they were happy to help.

“I think it went real smooth, and I’m glad that we were able to be the ones to help them,” Marcum said. “With all of our knowledge

and experience, I don’t think it could have went any

smoother. I’m a dog lover myself, too, and I’d want

the same thing for my animal. It’s always nice to see

someone willing to help you out in a time of need.”



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