

Painesville students tackle bullying while learning juggling, life lessons



From left, students Skylar Channel, David Filkins and Differentiated Specialist Sarah Wayner learn to balance newspaper cones. Right, The Dazzling Mills Family harmonize with their poodle Peppy. The troupe is, from left, Steve, Michelle, Kris and Tony.

It might seem like an unorthodox way to confront the problem of bullying, but The Dazzling Mills Family uses a combination of juggling clubs, unicycles and even a howling poodle to deliver its anti-bullying message.

“Who wants to get rid of bullying?” asked Steve Mills, the founder and father of the performing family troupe from Marion, Ohio.

The students of Summit Academy Community School Painesville responded with waving arms and cheers. It was part of an ongoing series of programs on the ways students can recognize and help to end bullying.

In addition to questions directly related to bullying (“What should you do if you’re being bullied?” Go tell someone responsible. “What should you do if you see someone being bullied? Spend time with the person.), the Mills family combined juggling-related advice that also builds character.

For example, Steve asked the students what happened when he dropped one of the balls. Sophia Yankee raised her hand.



William Terrell in the midst of flying clubs.

“Everybody makes mistakes,” she told him.

“Steve pointed at her and smiled. “You were right there for me,” he said.

Students David Filkins, Ethan Cook, Skylar Channel and Cassie Caldwell were picked from the audience to learn how to juggle. Differentiated Specialist Sarah Wayner successfully juggled a newspaper cone in her palm and on her forehead. William Terrell stood statue-like in the center of flying bowling pins between all four jugglers as an example of trusting one another. All of this was a very hands-on approach to learning about the issues of bullying in the community.

Behavioral Specialist Yvette Semon said a recent issue with bullying motivated her to attack the problem on a school-wide basis. She formed a committee of four teachers who developed a cross-curriculum approach. “Then when our art teacher, Audrey Leonard came up with the idea of using our team mascot ‘the Pride’ for our theme, everything began to fall into place. Our theme is ‘Protect the Pride.’ We want the students to understand they are part of a larger community of people who need to look out for one another. We need to respect each other enough to be kind, courteous and helpful to everyone in our community.”

Every class is looking for a way to investigate the issues and develop a plan for change. From poster contests to social skills classes, every day brings a new form of experiential learning.

For example, as the oldest students and role models in the school, the ninth grade class is conducting a survey to see who has been bullied and how it has impacted their lives. They will create graphs in math class to illustrate the problem, write a group research paper in English class and present their findings about bullying to the student body.

The winners of a school-wide poster contest will receive a wide variety of prizes depending on which level of the contest they win.

“Everything from ‘dress down day passes’ to lunch with two of their favorite friends is up for grabs. We also have a box full of screaming flying monkeys to give away. The prizes cost us as a school very little, but mean the world to the students,” said Ms. Semon.

“Our goal with the bullying program at Summit Painesville is not just to let kids know they don’t have to suffer alone. Our goal is to provide a sense of community for the kids. We want them to know school is a safe place for them to be. They should not have to worry about being threatened by other students or even their teachers.

“It has been a great experience to organize these activities for the kids. But it would not have been possible without the help of the staff committee members: Audrey Leonard, Alison Edmiston, Dave Flugum and Kerin Smith. They have all really stepped up to the plate to help make this a great experience for the entire student body.”

Harlem Globetrotter Seth Franco puts his own positive 'spin' on inspiring, entertaining students



Above: Devin Snyder balances a ball with the help of Harlem Globetrotter Seth Franco. Devin later joked with Mr. Franco: "I look up to you -- literally."

Below: Mr. Franco conducted a contest between the girls and the boys to determine which group had the best ball-handling skills. After the students cheered for both, the Globetrotter announced it was a tie.

Seth Franco brought a special message to the students at Summit Academy Community School -- Warren.

"Great things happen if you don't give up on yourself," he told the cheering assembly crowd.

While demonstrating a stunning array of maneuvers with a basketball, Franco shared his own history of personal challenges. After a leg injury in college forced him to stop playing, he started working on perfecting the many ball tricks he now performs with ease.

"When I got back up on my feet, I had all this new ability with the basketball," he said. "You know, sometimes you go through a hard moment in life, but if you don't give up, it makes you a better person."

Two years after his injury,

Franco said, he was playing professional basketball.

"Great things happen if you don't give up," he added. "Your dreams may not always turn out exactly the way you want. Sometimes they turn out way better."

Franco has the unusual distinction of being only the second Caucasian player in the entire history of the Harlem Globetrotters. In 2004, he beat out 40 other players to win one of four spots on the Globetrotters roster.

"What really makes you happy in life is not being number one," he said. "What makes you happy is not being the best because only one person can be the best."

What really makes you happy is not being the best. It is doing your best."

