

The Daily Telegram

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A sweet hobby

Jack Sampson has about 350 cookie jars. The Morenci resident has been collecting them for 20 years.

LIFE IN STYLE, Page C1

Sunday

April 20, 2008

Adrian, Michigan

Indians win

Mike Nowak and the Tecumseh baseball team finish 2-1 to win the Lena's Pizza Invitational.

SPORTS, Page B1

Adrian Freedom Festival



Telegram photo by Lad Strayer

From left, Marissa Vargas, Devin Reynolds and Chelsea Wells practice the Shuffle Matrix routines Friday in the physical education class at Adrian Middle School 7/8.

Students to 'play it forward'

By Autumn Lee
Daily Telegram Staff Writer

ADRIAN — About 1,400 students in the fifth through eighth grades from both Adrian middle schools and Lenawee Christian School will showcase exercises similar to those used by pro athletes at the Adrian Freedom Festival in May.

Those students will display their acquired skills during the national roll-out event for a program they've been using called Free2Play that allows schools to imple-

ment the "Metrics Play" curriculum, which is designed by the Gray Institute of Adrian. Free2Play includes instructional DVDs and functional exercise equipment provided at no cost to fifth- through eighth-grade physical education classes.

"We literally prove to every child they're an athlete," said Gary Gray, chief executive officer of the Gray Institute.

They've discovered that less than 20 percent of fourth-graders think they're

an athlete, he said.

If you go

The Adrian Freedom Festival will take place from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. May 29 at the Adrian College Multisport Performance Stadium.

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Play

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Free2Play encourages students to believe they are athletes, commit to healthier lifestyles, respect the abilities of others and use their commitment to improve their own fitness and health to raise money to help other children who do not have a stable home, are seriously ill or are enslaved, according to an overview of the program.

Community members will be given large "business cards" from participating students that will serve as an invitation to the Adrian Freedom Festival, Gray said. Those cards will indicate that the students have been working hard for 12 weeks at committing to a healthy lifestyle and, as a

result, want to allow other kids to become healthy, too. The invitation will direct recipients to the Gray Institute's Web site, www.grayinstitute.com, which will have a link in about two weeks that will provide additional information about raising funds to allow other children to have healthier lives.

Local funds raised will be directed to the Toledo Children's Hospital, local public schools' homeless education programs and the Not for Sale campaign, a nonprofit organization that helps other organizations involved in abolitionist activities in the United States and worldwide. The organization is working to help free an estimated 27 million people who are enslaved throughout the world, including an estimated 200,000 people in the United States.

Gray is also working

toward enhancing the definition of "athlete" and "sport."

"In life, we believe your greatest competitor is you," he said, adding, "We believe the greatest sport is giving."

Gray's nonprofit organization Tridoma Free2Play is testing its latest prototype educational DVDs for the Free2Play program, he said.

Adrian is serving as the "beta" test site for the festival, and the schools have been using a condensed version of the program this year instead of the normal yearlong length. Schools in San Francisco are also testing the program but are not planning a festival.

Sam Skeels, a physical education teacher at Adrian Middle School 5/6, has been using Free2Play during his classes for about a month. Using dodgeball as an example, he said kids were not

really getting much exercise during their PE. classes in the past. With the Free2Play program, he said the kids are moving and having fun.

Skeels said it took a little bit for the kids to catch on, but they really enjoy the program.

An observer of his gym class would see a lot of smiles, laughing and giggling from the kids, as well as them encouraging each other, he said.

Becky Wagley, a physical education teacher at Adrian Middle School 7/8, said they've had the Free2Play materials for about three weeks and are in the fifth unit of the program. She devotes about 10 to 15 minutes of the class period to the Free2Play program.

Usually every other day, Wagley's students learn a new lesson. The following day after the lesson is introduced, she said she incorporates it

into the warmup or conditioning segment of the class.

At the end of the lesson, the kids learn a sign language phrase, Skeels said. He's seen them signing later at lunch time.

"I think it's not only going to have a great impact inside the school, but outside the school as well," he said.

Skeels said the lessons are something the kids can show to their parents at home, and they're using the same types of movements within the three planes of motion that are applied in physical therapy sessions.

Skeels said he hopes the Adrian community can support Free2Play.

"There are opportunities for everyone to get involved in this cause," he said. "I hope people recognize that and get on board."

Wagley said her students

are a "little nervous and excited" about showing off what they've learned at the festival.

Through grassroots training initiatives, Free2Play has reached thousands of children, according to a synopsis of the program. With the design of national and global initiatives, it is projected Free2Play will reach 10,000 schools and community programs within the first year, 50,000 schools and community programs within three years and more than 200,000 schools and community programs worldwide within 10 years.

In the meantime, Gray is seeking a national sponsor in the sports realm to help distribute Free2Play.

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