

By Christopher Burnett | Staff Writer

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Preschoolers learn about community helpers

MacArthur Elementary School preschool teachers organize and present a “Community Helper Day.”

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MacArthur Elementary School preschool teachers organized and presented a “Community Helper Day” Oct. 14. Both morning and afternoon classes of approximately 80 students participated. Brittany Cooper and Colleen Anderson were the preschool teachers who planned the learning activities and coordinated within the community for volunteer participants.

“Our students are learning about different ‘helpers’ in our community,” Cooper said. “We have various stations set up today that the children will visit, interact with and learn about various professions that provide services. Among those represented today are a veterinarian, a farmer, a firefighter, a police officer, a nurse, a doctor, a coach, a librarian and a photographer.”

Cooper said that the children came dressed in attire associated with professions they aspire to.

The preschoolers visited the learning stations in groups of four students. After several minutes of activities at a particular station, the groups would rotate to the next station until all learning stations had been visited.

Students played with items associated with each profession. Adult volunteers helped teachers and assistants manage each of the stations.

“This learning event has gone very well,” Cooper said. “The children are engaged and enthusiastic about learning at each of the various stations.”

One of the volunteers not only showed off her profession, but is also a parent of one of the students.

“My station is a photography booth and I’m simply taking pictures of the kids dressed as what they would like to be when they grow up,” said volunteer Sunshine Miller.

Volunteering for the postal carrier learning station was another preschool mom, Danielle Speer.

“This station actively teaches how to create and send correspondences by mail,” Speer said. “Students can draw a picture or write a letter to a family member, address the letter and put postage on the envelope.”

The mission of MacArthur Elementary School is to develop a community of continuous learners. The vision of the staff is to inspire a passion for learning in students through a challenge-based environment.

“The preschool teachers (Cooper and Anderson) came to me with an idea related to their unit of study about ‘community helpers,’” said MacArthur Principal Tyler Fowler. “I thought it was a great idea, and the realized learning event is going really well today. I was in one of the teacher’s classes last week where they were talking about Fort Leavenworth as a community. It was a ‘virtual tour’ with enlarged pictures of various places around post up on the classroom smart board. The teacher was simulating to be the bus driver, and as she drove them around, she’d ask questions about the different places on the tour. So, this is a culminating activity of that unit.”

Midway into the station rotations, the preschoolers encountered Maj. (Dr.) Chris Cowan, a physician currently attending the Command and General Staff College.

“We are taking this opportunity to tell the children what doctors and nurses do,” Cowan said. “Our station also explains to them how medical professionals help the community, as well as how we can make them feel better if they become ill.”

Representing the veterinary profession was Lynelle Killinger, an animal caretaker from the Fort Leavenworth Veterinary Treatment Facility.

She provided a pet treatment record that students could take home.

“It has information inside about how to meet a new pet, there’s a pet’s physical exam form, several things to color and information on how to keep your pet safe this Halloween,” Killinger said.

Preschool student Alyce Speer, 4, was dressed as a doctor.

“Doctors help people feel better,” she said. “And, they use a stethoscope to check peoples’ heartbeat.”

Fredia Johnson, a paraprofessional with the pre-kindergarten program, represented the chef station.



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

Four-year-old Alyce Speer displays her doctor career choice as she poses for a photograph during Community Helper Day for pre-kindergarten students Oct. 14 at MacArthur Elementary School. Volunteer Sunshine Miller, mother of pre-kindergarten student Matthew Miller, took photos of the children, some in corresponding costume to the career choices. Career choices ranged from firefighter to Lego builder. Children visited stations to learn about coaches, farmers, postal carriers and other community helpers during the event. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp

“Nutrition is another of the subjects that we have been studying with this unit in class,” Johnson said. “We tie this station in with the students’ normal snack time. Questions and answers about the food are included during the process while they are eating.”

The subject of another learning station was police officers.

“We are presenting the police officer station, where we talk with the students about what police officers do to serve their community and how the students can thank them for their service,” said Capt. Stephanie Pfeiffer, Military Police officer and CGSC student. “We also paint the students’ hands blue, symbolizing a color associated with police officers. Then, we have them give a ‘high five’ to the piece of paper — symbolizing with a high five that they are giving thanks for the work done by their police officers,” Pfeiffer said.

Librarian station volunteer Aileen Zayas said she has lived in the Fort Leavenworth community for three years.

“I’m super enjoying this with the kids,” Zayas said. “Letting them know that when we come to the library, we are quiet as a courtesy to others. I’m reading some stories and telling the students the types of information that can be found at the library.”

“Last year we were able to take the children to the fire station,” Anderson said. “But this year field trips were not an option for preschoolers. We thought about ways to teach the students about community helpers without having to go on a field trip, yet still get out of the classroom. We also came up with the idea of just making a single day of it. Doing so, we found that we didn’t have to interrupt our school day on several days to account for many individual presentations over a period of time. With the format of this learning activity, we were able to have all of these volunteers and visitors come to our school on just one day.”