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News

SOUTHGATE: High school gym teacher adds unicycle riding to her curriculum

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By Rene Cizio

SOUTHGATE — Students attending Southgate Adult and Community Education's alternative high school found out recently how "alternative" it can be.

Last week, the physical education students in several Asher school classes learned how to ride a unicycle.

The idea came from math teacher Wendy Grzych, who has a secret identity: president of the Unicycling Society of America Inc. and former international champion of artistic unicycling.

Grzych partnered with instructor Joe Lezotte to offer a class on unicycle riding.

Grzych, who teaches beginner unicycling classes for the Redford Township Unicycle Club, thought it would be a unique experience for the students in the alternative education program.

"It was really hard," Southgate resident Matt Hendon, 17, said. "I had fun trying to do it on my own."

Grzych, her daughter, Amanda, and friends Aaron Egan and Roy Kellerman brought 20 unicycles to the school and taught the students how to ride.

The students also had the opportunity to learn to juggle; balance on a rola bola, a plank on a cylinder on which a person balances; propel a walking globe, a large, firm ball; and ride a unibike.

Ecorse resident Shane Magiera, 17, was one of the first students who rode the unicycle without assistance.

He said he didn't realize how hard it was.

"I listened to the instructors and exactly how I should do it and I kept trying until I did," he said. "It was fun. I am pretty sure that I never would have learned how to ride a unicycle if it weren't part of my PE class."

This is not the first unique class in the Asher physical education department.

The school was just awarded the Michigan Association of School Boards 2009 Best of the Best award in Health and Safety for its golf and fitness program.

"This was a high honor in that all K-12 schools compete for the state's top award and they awarded it to Asher, an alternative high school," academic adviser Ruth Kemp said.

The MASB said Asher's golf and fitness program provides students, who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity or resources, with an appreciation for the game of golf and teaches an at-risk population vital life lessons such as accountability and how to appropriately interact with others in a new setting.

The school received a statue and a check for \$1,500 to further advance the program.

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Learning how to ride a unicycle recently with help from instructor Wendy Grzych (right) and her daughter, Amanda, is Southgate Adult and Community Education Alternative High School student Jamie Hill, 17, of Lincoln Park.



Jonathon Kennedy, 18, of Lincoln Park, a Southgate Adult and Community Education Alternative High School student, learned how to ride a unicycle recently during a physical education class.