Children learn fire safety from those who know it best

By ANNE SAVANICK
Collegian Staff Writer

As the fire engine drove down Gerald Street with lights flashing and sirens blaring, some children covered their ears while others jumped up to wave to the departing firefighters.

This is not a happy ending to a possibly tragic story, rather it is a story about preventing a tragedy.

While some might think firefighters only put out blazes, they also subject themselves to dozens of energetic preschoolers in the name of fire safety.

Members of the Alpha Fire Company visited the Children's World Learning and Day Care Center, 278 Gerald St., yesterday morning as part of their fire prevention and safety program, said David Felice, Alpha Fire Company Fire Prevention Committee chair and Centre Region Code Administration Fire Inspector.

For the children, the presentation was a chance to learn fire safety and become acquainted with firefighters.

About 30 children between the ages of 3 and 5 watched the firefighters intently. The presentation lasted about 45 minutes.

Afterward, a group of children, Alexa Saunders, 4, Sara Kurtz, 4, and Sarah Gierhart, 5, talked about what they had learned.

"When the (fire) alarm goes off, you wake up," said Saunders, shifting her weight from side to side. "(You) crawl on your knees and see if the (door) knob's hot."

Kurtz added that people should "wait 'til it cools off then go outside."

This new fire safety knowledge makes Alpha Company Firefighter John Becker smile.

> "If we make it exciting, they'll remember it longer."
>
> — Steve Lower
> Alpha Fire Company assistant chief

Becker, one of the firefighters who spoke to the children, said they stress that children get out of the house as soon as possible.

In addition to the presentation at Children's World, Felice said programs are planned at several other day care facilities and schools, and an open house is planned at the Alpha Fire Company on Saturday.

Becker said he and other firefighters visit the schools.

"I was in between classes so I went," he said. "I enjoy it. (The presentations are) something we should do for the public."

Presentations are important because it is the best fire prevention method, said Assistant Chief Steve Lower of the Alpha Fire Company.

Lower said the best part of the presentations is seeing the children's faces and reactions when a firefighter puts on the gear.

"If we make it exciting, they'll remember it longer," Lower said.

Becker said he has seen little children cry at the sight of firefighters wearing their breathing apparatuses.

However, at Children's World yesterday, Becker said, it was a different story.

"Their eyes were wide open."

Collegian Photo/Erin Lockwood

Children at Children's World Learning and Day Care Center, 278 Gerald St., learn about fire prevention during Fire Safety Week. Presentations like the one yesterday are part of many firefighters' jobs.

The International Business Association
will be having a meeting tonight
with special guest speaker
Jerry Matiyak
of AT&T who will be discussing
"Work habits for the radically changing International Markets and Information Age"
at 7pm in 365 Willard
questions call Brian 867-3921

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