

EDUCATION

Heroes kids learn what it takes to be **Fire Fit**



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Heroes K-8 Academy eighth-grader Nick Cortez, 14, runs with a fire hose during an obstacle course designed to expose students to a firefighters workout on Tuesday.

Innovative program stresses fitness, discipline, scholarship

BY JON POMPIA
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Students at Heroes K-8 Academy got an up-close, if not sometimes winded, look at the discipline and commitment needed to be a Pueblo firefighter.

Tim Trujillo, firefighter and fitness coordinator for the department, brought to the school the innovative Fire Fit Kids program, which stresses the importance of physical fitness and wellness, as well as education, in first responder careers.

“We’re going to talk about health and wellness,” Trujillo told the second of the day’s nine student groups. “But also the importance of mindfulness and how important it is to pay attention in class.

“Math and science and geometry — all those things come into play in the fire department. Yes, fitness is important, but so is being mindful and thoughtful of other people.”

While a series of warm-up exercises — bear crawl, monster walk, etc. — kicked off the sessions, for most, the highlight was an excursion through a firefighting-themed obstacle course. This trek required participants to pull in and then run with a lengthy firehose, bear crawl around pylons, roll a tire, crawl through tarps and carry a couple sandbags ... with some pushups thrown in for good measure.

As quickly as possible. “Touch the ground! Touch the ground! At least get low,” Trujillo barked at a student who slacked his way around the pylons. “You’re my athlete, so let’s do this.”

And to another: “Hey, roll the tire, don’t bounce it around! Are you a volleyball player? Come on.”

After each of the students completed the course — some more out of breath than others — Trujillo upped

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Heroes seventh-graders Bianka Lilly, 14 (right), and Rayelynn Landry, 14, watch instructions on how to do push-ups in a program designed to give them an idea of Pueblo firefighting duties.



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the endurance ante by creating a boys and girls team, challenging members to hold pushup and squat positions while a designated leader made his or her way through the course.

“Oh man,” moaned one boy as he struggled to hold up his body. “This is much tougher than the obstacle course.”

“Come on. Don’t break down on me,” encouraged Trujillo. “You’re worth points to me.”

For all the fun and frolicking, the Fire Fit Kids program conveyed the message Trujillo designed it to.

“I like the program,” said Hizza Yslas, 13, a

seventh-grader. “It’s tough to be a fireman but I think I can handle it.

“But I did learn that to be a good fireman, the first thing we need to do is stay in school. And be in good shape and want to help people.”

“I love the smiles on their faces,” Trujillo said as the group departed and another arrived.

“Athleticism and coordination is one thing but they’re super, super involved — listening to what we’re saying and not giving any back talk.

“To me, what they’re doing today is more exciting than if they won a state championship.”

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