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## Sunnyside Preschool celebrates 10 years using Risk Watch program

### Lake Stevens Fire Department helps in celebration

BY PAM STEVENS | EDITOR

Ten years ago the BIC sponsored Risk Watch program began its journey into schools around the nation. They asked children to come up with the name of their Risk Watch mascot, a smiling and spotted Dalmatian.

After receiving over 7,000 entries from all over the world, Lake Stevens' own Sunnyside Preschool came up with the winning name, "Hero".

Ten years later Sunnyside Preschool still uses the Risk Watch program to teach their students how to be safe in many different situations, including what to do if there is a fire.

"The Risk Watch program gives our school the opportunity to reach out beyond the classroom," Sunnyside's Director Cindy Brengman said. "Gaining the knowledge of the Risk Watch lessons helps children to feel safe



Sunnyside student Justin Huffaker talks with firefighter Lisa Defenbaugh. Justin was also the winner of ride on a fire truck.

and trusting in their environment."

To celebrate it's ten years, students from Sunnyside joined

Lake Stevens Fire Marshall Robert Marshall at the Fire Station on 91st Street to learn more about fire safety.

One focus of the event was to help the kids understand that when firefighters show up in their bunker gear, or what they call "safe clothes," they are there to help keep everyone safe.

"They need to understand that if firefighters are in their safe clothes you won't see their ears, mouth or face, only their eyes, but you should always go to a firefighter in their safe clothes," Marshall said.

The firefighters did some role-playing with the kids to help teach them this very important rule.

Two of the firefighters crawled into the bay and around the walls dressed in full gear. After making their way around the bay the firefighters took off their helmets to show the kids that they are just people there to help them.

"It was really cool and I think the thing that had the best impact was the firefighters crawling in with their safe clothes on," Marshall said.

He explained that they are their friends and they shouldn't run away from them.

"When the firefighters entered the bay crawling on hands and knees in full gear feeling the walls and floor, some of the children snuggled a little closer into their parent's lap," Brengman explained. "Some parents reported that in the days that followed their children reenacted the moves of the firefighters at home."

Brengman said that this is one way children learn life lessons.

"It is through this dramatic play that children address their worries and can gain control over their fears," she said.

The Risk Watch program has had a profound effect on Sunnyside Preschool when in 1999, 5-year-old Courtney Maxfield saved the life of her two and a half year-old brother from choking after learning the Heimlich Maneuver in a Risk Watch seminar given at the preschool.

"Risk Watch works for the pure fact that the knowledge and skills taught at each grade level are developmental and age appropriate," Brengman said.



Firefighter Scott Boswell helps Sunnyside student Jaden Freeman off of the fire truck.

