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SUNDAY

The Grand Island

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Eagle Scout builds gaga ball pit at Knickrehm



By Austin Koeller

austin.koeller@theindependent.com

Knickrehm Elementary School students have an additional option when it comes to physical activities thanks to a recent Eagle Scout project.

Justin Hollister, an eighth-grader at Grand Island Central Catholic and a Boy Scout with Troop 114, recently built a gaga ball pit on the north grass area at Knickrehm — his alma mater — as part of his Eagle Scout project. He said he was brainstorming ideas of what to do for his project when he remembered having fun at Camp Augustine playing gaga ball.

Justin said gaga ball is played in a pit and starts with a ball being thrown into the middle of it. He said the ball can only be touched using body parts above the knee and if it touches anywhere below the knee, a player is out of the game. If the ball goes out of the pit, the last person who touched it is out. Players cannot hold the ball.

Justin said he wanted to install a gaga ball pit specifically at Knickrehm because he attended the school and wanted to have something that could be used by Knickrehm students, neighborhood kids and Cub Scouts, whose troop is chartered at the school, for a long time.

To begin his project, Justin said, he had to get permission from Grand Island Public Schools — specifi-

cally Buildings and Grounds Director Dan Petsch — and draw out a sketch of the gaga ball pit.

Charlene Hollister, Justin's mom, said Justin sent the initial email to GIPS in May and received an answer back a month later that it was OK to do the project. It then took him another month to complete it.

"GIPS asked Justin what his business plan was, for a sketch and where he planned to put the gaga ball pit," Charlene said. "He did have to do his proposal for the Eagle Scout project paperwork and get it approved through the troop as well."

Justin said he also reached out to Knickrehm fourth-grade teacher Nancy Sutherland to see if anyone connected to the school "could help out." She directed him to Mudd Jockies and The Home Depot, who both agreed to donate supplies and/or labor to the project.

Justin said he received donations of materials from a number of other local businesses.

Charlene said Mudd Jockies "helped us out way more than we expected," spending a day doing concrete work for the gaga ball pit. She said concrete work was done first and was allowed to set for a few days before two days of work was done on completing the construction of the gaga ball pit.

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TOP: The game is on as fourth-graders, including (from left) Cezar Garcia and Masiya Moore, play in the recently built gaga ball pit at Knickrehm Elementary School in Grand Island.

FAR LEFT: Zayden Bislend just misses getting hit with the ball.

ABOVE LEFT: Jacob Hernandez (left) and Masiya Moore both try to hit the ball as fourth-graders play gaga ball.

Independent/Barrett Stinson

BELOW LEFT: Justin Hollister, a Boy Scout with Troop 114, stands in front of a gaga ball pit at Knickrehm Elementary School Wednesday afternoon. Hollister constructed the pit as part of his Eagle Scout project.

Independent/Austin Koeller

Response to State Fair's Hispanic flavor was positive

Big draw was Selena tribute band

By Jeff Bahr

jeff.bahr@theindependent.com

Organizers were pleased with the response to the Hispanic-oriented activities at the Nebraska State Fair on Sunday, Sept. 1, which was the first such event since the State Fair's initial appearance in Grand Island in 2010.

"It was very successful. I got a lot of feedback at the end of the night," said Rosa Alvarado, a member of the State Fair Latino Advisory Committee.

As with any first-time event, there were a few glitches. "But you know what? We got through it. And it turned out really good."

All of the activities took place at the Pump and Pantry Party Pit. The party was still going at midnight when things had to shut down in accordance with fair rules. Attendance grew after the Little Big Town concert concluded that night at the Heartland Events Center.



The most successful event was an appearance by a Selena tribute band from Yuma, Ariz. The sev-

en-piece band performed at 6:30 p.m. That concert had both cross-generational and cross-cultural ap-

peal, said Yolanda Nuncio, another member of the Latino Advisory Committee. Members of four gen-

More than 20 members of the Hispanic community added a colorful touch to the Nebraska State Fair Parade on Sunday, Sept. 1. Participants waved flags from Latin American countries and wore traditional dancing outfits.

Courtesy of Elvie Montes

erations are fans of the singer, who died in 1995. Her music is also enjoyed by both Mexican-Americans and Americans, Nuncio said.

The organizers look upon the day as the kickoff for Hispanic Heritage Month, which is September. A proclamation was signed by Grand Island Mayor Roger Steele.

Nuncio and Alvarado give credit to State Fair Executive Director Lori Cox. Last fall, Nuncio went to see Cox about an increase in Latino activities.

"And she was very receptive. She assigned her staff to work with us on this," Nuncio said.

One of the groups performing was a mariachi group from Lincoln High School, called Los Mariachis de la Ciudad Estrella.

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