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[Rockledge teacher unveils new classroom](#) Makeover won through national safety contest

By Andrea Noble
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Third-graders streaming into Rockledge teacher Jessica Beamon's classroom Monday morning were gaped with surprise at the new desks, murals and bookcases that awaited them. Beamon won a \$10,000 classroom makeover last year through a national child safety education program and over the summer her classroom was completely redesigned.

Work on some the redesign of the Bowie classroom, like paintings on the wall, was done over the summer but covered up so students couldn't see it once school started. The room was completely finished with the addition of the new furniture this past weekend.

Rockledge Principal Pamela Landry said the makeover will aid Beamon's classroom teaching through better organization. Beamon said before the makeover, her classroom was crowded and difficult to move through.

"We definitely knew we needed space," Beamon said of the planning for the makeover. "We only had two little shelves."

With the addition of bookcases, cubby holes for the students' supplies and other storage space, Beamon said the classroom has a design more conducive to learning. With books now shelved on a bookcase by genre, Landry compared the design to a Borders book store and said it would be a fun experience for the kids to browse through them.

"The mural was my favorite because it was so pretty," said third-grader Claudia Carter of new artwork in the classroom that included children reciting rules of safety the students were taught.

Beamon was one of five teachers presented with a makeover by Honeywell and National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which sponsored the contest Beamon entered.

She was awarded the prize after teaching her students a "safety rap" and introducing a safety mascot, Safety Sam the shark, to highlight rules for children to follow to protect themselves. Beamon said she came up with the rap as a creative way to teach the safety rules to make sure her students would remember them. The four rules emphasize children not accepting anything from strangers, travelling with friends, saying no to uncomfortable advances and telling trusted adults if anyone does anything to harm them.

Last year's third-graders learned Beamon's rap about the safety rules and after touring their old classroom to see the improvements they performed it, complete with beat box sound effects.

"To grow into the best person you can be, you've gotta' live your life thinking safely," they rapped.

Fourth-grader Maeve Baker said her class learned the rap over a two-month period last year.

"We liked [the rap]. It was kind of funny," Baker said.

Before her new class of third-graders, Beamon told students they too would learn the rap and help to teach it to younger students.

Beamon's classroom was the first that Mitchellville interior designer Valerie Buckner-Holzer had planned. She said the most challenging part of the makeover was incorporating all of the visual elements, including the mural.

"I wanted to make sure it was incorporating the classroom theme, 'A World of Learning,'" Buckner-Holzer said.

She met with Beamon to discuss ideas almost every other day over the summer. As designs came to life, they were covered up to keep the final design a surprise to the students.

After touring Beamon's room, fourth-grader Yemi Oladimeji and Baker admitted being a little jealous of the new classroom.

"We want to be in her class again," Oladimeji said.



Rockledge teacher is "Beamon" with pride in new safety classroom

By Christina Blakeney
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The kickoff of the "Got 2B Safe Program" at Rockledge Elementary School started with the reveal of a new-and-improved \$10,000 classroom.

In fact, the students shouted, "Move that School Bus!" echoing the "Extreme Makeover" television home repair show phenomenon.

"It's cool" and "really cute" were just some of the students' reactions once they entered the doorway of the classroom of their teacher, Jessica Beamon, who created a safety program and rap song that led to the winning classroom makeover.

Beamon is one of five teachers to win the grand prize, and she is the only winner from Maryland.

And it taught the students a valuable lesson about their personal safety.

"Safety Sam," a shark, is an essential part of the mural design, and it's something the kids are sinking their teeth into.

"I really like it. We have a lot more space than other classrooms," said Emily Bendlin a third-grader in Beamon's homeroom.

Another student, Sabrina Eller, said, "I like the classroom because we're the only class in the school to have it."

Principal Pamela Landry congratulated the students on learning the four rules of safety, and Beamon on teaching the concept.

A safety rap song was performed by Beamon's former class, currently in the fourth grade, to teach the children about the four rules of safety.

The song explains these rules: "No. 1 is to check first, the second is go with a friend, three is it's my body, and the fourth and most important rule, tell a trusted adult."

With these rules the children learn how to value their personal safety to keep them protected.

Beamon was beaming the entire day, and in a very touching moment through tears she said, "I thank the students, because they inspire me."

A plaque was presented in Beamon's honor for carrying through with the safety initiative, from one of the representatives at Honeywell.

"This is one of our key programs," he said.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children partnered with Honeywell to begin this program for child safety and to prevent any child from being abducted or sexually exploited.

Tamika Contee, the muralist for the artwork in the classroom, added an aesthetic appeal to the classroom. The designer for the project, Valerie Buckner-Holzer, who refurbished the desks, was also present.

She said it "enhances and promotes learning," for the students.

City Councilwoman Diane Polangin also visited the school with a proclamation in tow, to dedicate the day as the official "Got 2B Safe-Child Safety Day."

"The \$10,000 makeover is really important to the students, teachers, community and to the school. It really brought all this learning world to life," said Beamon.

In fact, the theme for the class is "a world of learning," and will coincide with the safety program.

Said Polangin, "We always have to remember to keep our children safe, they're our best asset."

"I am very blessed to teach in the community that I do," said Beamon.