



<http://www.mysuncoast.com/Global/story.asp?s=10982547>

Oneco classroom gets \$10,000 makeover

August 24, 2009

MANATEE COUNTY - Many teachers and administrators have spent a lot of time preparing for this first day of school. One kindergarten teacher in Manatee County received a \$10,000 boost for his classroom thanks to a national contest.

"I've been waiting for this day for a long time," says kindergarten teacher Matt Norvell. He says the first day of school for him and his class full of 5 and 6 year olds is off to a great start. "We're going to start talking about the alphabet, phonics and today were going to talk about shapes and rectangles and we're even going to start writing today," says Norvell.

This year he has some brand new tools to help him teach. Over the summer, a design team helped Norvell spend \$10,000 in prize money to stock his Oneco Elementary classroom with new furniture and teaching materials. Norvell had entered the Honeywell Got2BSafe! national contest and won. He created a weeklong curriculum focused around keeping children safe from abduction and sexual exploitation.

"I think I hit all the things they wanted me to do. They wanted kids teaching kids, they wanted community involved they wanted parental involvement and I talked about all those things," says Norvell.

He is one of only five in the country to win the grand prize. The contest is sponsored by The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and Honeywell Aerospace. "This is really where you can get them, and get the education going now, early in their lives where it will really sink it, where they will really understand how they can personally take control of the situation," says Mark Kane of Honeywell.

Statistics from the NCMEC show 2,000 children are reported missing every day in the US.

Part of Norvell's curriculum includes bringing in law enforcement to talk to the students and perform skits, along with an assembly during report card pick up night. "Providing an education is one thing but he went one step beyond and that just goes to show what a dedicated and loving teacher he is," says Manatee County Commissioner Donna Hayes who came out for the unveiling.

Norvell used the money to buy new chairs, bean bags, a colorful rug, a mural on the wall and mailboxes for the students. The makeover was also environmentally friendly, so they replaced the lighting with energy efficient lighting. A digital white board is also on the way.

"One more tool to get the kids excited about learning and I want them to be excited about learning reading writing science and math, but also I want them to be safe I want them to come back the next day," says Norvell.

<http://www.bradenton.com/news/story/1658722.html>

First day of school off to a smooth start

By Natalie Neysa Alund
August 24, 2009

MANATEE — A single tear slid down Laurie Aldama's cheek this morning as she stood inside her son's kindergarten classroom at Oneco Elementary.

"I'm really excited for him," Aldama said as she snapped a photo of 5-year-old Alexander as he sat at his desk coloring with a blue crayon.

Nearby him sat classmate Andrew Eason, who stared out the door window where his mother stood outside looking in.

"I don't want him to grow up," his mom, Sarah Woebke, said after taking one last glance at her son before walking away from the classroom. "When I was leaving Andrew didn't cry. I think I'm gonna cry."

The boys were among about 42,000 students in Manatee County who stepped inside classrooms for the first day of school today.

Prior to the school day's start, crossing guards manned corners across the county as children boarded their respective buses.

Over at Palm View Elementary, school officials pointed lost parents in the direction of their children's respective classrooms in an effort to get them to the right place on time. Inside JoAnn Lovett's kindergarten classroom, it took three teachers about five minutes to distract a distressed 5-year-old student so her mother could slide out the door.

Across town at Manatee School for the Arts in Palmetto, Assistant Principal Terry Devine made a few morning announcements over a loud speaker as students gathered in their homeroom classes.

"So far things are going smoothly," he said. The school this year will serves 1,300 students in grades six through 12.

Inside Samoset Elementary, Principal Scott Boyes spoke to a group of kindergarten parents and answered questions.

Posted in some of the school's hallways were signs that read, "Welcome!" and "You're off to a great start!"

Back at Oneco, the day was particularly exciting for kindergartners Alexander and Andrew because their teacher Matt Norvell recently won a \$10,000 eco-classroom makeover. He won the grand prize by entering Honeywell and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's fourth annual Got 2B Safe! Awards Program, which recognizes teachers committed to keeping children safer from abduction and sexual exploitation.

Norvell created a five-day curriculum on the Got2b Safety rules: Check first; It's my body; Go with a friend; and Tell a trusted adult. His weeklong program incorporates a different safety activity on each day, he said. Activities include puppet shows that introduce the Got 2B Safe! Four Rules of Safety, inviting fifth grade students and police officers to come in and perform skits and chants to reinforce the rules, and conducting a Got 2B Safe! assembly during report card pickup night.

This morning during the classroom's revealing, Honeywell spokesman Mark Kane presented Norvell with a golden apple "Got 2B Safe" award in front of his new students and school officials including Superintendent Tim McGonegal.

"This is one further step in further empowering students ... to teach them life saving lessons," Kane said.

Manatee County Commissioner Donna Hayes also was in attendance to congratulate Norvell and present him with a proclamation.

As a result of his win and as a way to address the increasing importance of energy-efficiency, part of the classroom makeover included replacing the room's light bulbs with energy-efficient lighting.

The walls are painted green as part of a jungle theme. Leftover prize money bought classroom items, including a smartboard, digital cameras and books.

"This is just fantastic," McGonegal said as he looked around the room.

As of about 9:15 a.m., McGonegal said he'd gotten good reports from schools across the county for the start to the school year. No major problems were reported.

Tiffany Tompkins-Condle contributed to this report.

<http://www.bradenton.com/news/story/1660097-p2.html>

Also ran in print version

Start of school greeted with mixed emotions

But new year in Manatee County starts with smooth first day

By Natalie Neysa Alund
August 25, 2009

MANATEE — Sporting a pink and black Hannah Montana backpack, Cleiry Umanzur smiled big as she walked into Matt Norvell's kindergarten class at Oneco Elementary on Monday morning.

"I missed you," Norvell said as he bent down and hugged the little girl. "But I'm not your teacher anymore. You're going into first grade now."

Without blinking, Cleiry's eyes welled up with tears.

Her reaction made Norvell misty eyed.

"You're a big girl now," he said smiling, then slowly escorting her out of his first-floor room at the school off State Road 70.

Emotions ran high Monday morning during the first day of school for about 42,000 students in Manatee County.

Inside that same classroom, a single tear slid down Laurie Aldama's cheek.

"I'm really excited for him," Aldama said as she snapped a photo of her 5-year-old son Alexander as he colored a picture at his desk.

Nearby sat classmate Andrew Eason, who stared out the door window where his mother stood outside looking in.

"I don't want him to grow up," his mom, Sarah Wuebke, said after taking one last glance at her son before walking away from the classroom. "When I was leaving, Andrew didn't cry. I think I'm gonna cry."

Prior to the school day's start, crossing guards manned corners across the county as children boarded their respective buses.

At Palm View Elementary, where \$14.5 million in construction had just been finished, school officials pointed a few lost parents in the direction of their children's classrooms.

Inside JoAnn Lovett's kindergarten classroom, it took three teachers about five minutes to distract a distressed 5-year-old student so her mother could slide out the door.

Across town at Manatee School for the Arts in Palmetto, Assistant Principal Terry Devine made a few morning announcements over a loud speaker as students gathered in their homeroom classes.

"So far things are going smoothly," he said. The school this year will serve 1,300 students in grades six through 12.

At Palmetto High School, Johntrice McGee, 15, and her cousin Acie Duncan, 16, walked out of the school holding papers in their hands.

"We're both in the process of changing schools so we are registering for high school," McGee said. "We'll be back tomorrow to start. We're ready to get on and see bigger and better things!"

Over at Samoset Elementary, Principal Scott Boyes spoke to a group of kindergarten parents and answered questions.

Posted in some of the school's hallways were signs that read, "Welcome!" and "You're off to a great start!"

Later in the day, he walked the halls of a new two-floor wing that consists of rooms including a computer lab, and pre-K and fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms.

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Activities include puppet shows that introduce the Got 2B Safe! Four Rules of Safety, inviting fifth grade students and police officers to come in and perform skits and chants to reinforce the rules, and conducting a Got 2B Safe! assembly during report card pickup night.

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At the day's end, McGonegal said there were no major glitches.

Foreign exchange student David Mauboussin, who spent his first day as an American student at Braden River High School, said something similar Monday evening.

"Today at school was a nice day and I understood everything that the teacher said, so I am very proud of myself," said the 17-year-old student from France. "I am very tired too. It was a good ending."

— Tiffany Tompkins-Condle contributed to this report.



Oneco Elementary School kindergarten teacher Matt Norvell stands in front of a mural what was part of a \$10,000 makeover for his classroom. Norvell was one of 5 national winners of for his classroom, in the Got2BSafe! campaign sponsored by Honeywell and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

The Bradenton Times

http://www.thebradentontimes.com/news/2009/08/25/local_news/kindergarten_students_enjoy_classroom_after_makeover/

Kindergarten students enjoy classroom after makeover

Oneco Elementary teacher Matt Norvell won grand prize from Honeywell

August 25, 2009
By Vincent F. Safuto

BRADENTON - When the little first-grader walked into Matt Norvell's classroom on Monday morning with tears in her eyes, and he comforted her and talked gently to her, one thing came through: this man was born to teach.

Norvell, 25, is a kindergarten teacher at Oneco Elementary School. In his second year of teaching, he was the recipient of a classroom makeover courtesy of Honeywell Hometown Solutions. The little girl, wearing a new backpack and looking sad, just wanted to be back in the familiar world she knew from last year, with the kind man who always knew the right things to say.

"That was the first one" who showed up, he said. "She was one that I wished could stay, but she's ready. She'll excel."

He invited her to come back later and talk, and she wiped her eyes and left the room for the new adventures of first grade. Sometimes, progress isn't easy but it has to be done.

Honeywell and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children created the Got 2B Safe! Program in 2003. It gives parents, teachers and children vital child-safety skills to protect the children from being abducted or sexually exploited. Five grand prize winners received a free eco-classroom makeover valued at \$10,000, and 100 first prize winners got \$500 worth of school supplies.

With children and parents in the main office, outside the buildings and lining the hallways, Oneco Elementary was buzzing on the first day of school.

Inside the made-over classroom before the children and their parents were let in, adults admired the murals, the carpeting, the posters and the neat child-sized desks and chairs set up



Oneco Elementary School kindergarten teacher Matt Norvell shows children the mailboxes in their new classroom.

in groups of four, with the children's names at each place. On each desk was a cup with pencils and crayons, and a drawing for the children to color.

School Superintendent Tim McGonegal, district spokeswoman Margi Nanney, County Commissioner Donna Hayes, Honeywell executive Mark Kane and event manager Alicia Wells, plus the media people, admired the classroom. In a corner and beaming with pride were Julie Norvell, Matt's wife, and Julie's mother, Susan Leonard.

Finally, the moment came and Matt Norvell walked outside the classroom and closed the door. When the children were ready, he opened the door and guided them into the room and showed them their mailboxes, the displays and the murals on the walls. They looked impressed, but a bit bemused at all the adults gathered in the room watching them, taking video and firing off photos. A few parents watched as their pride and joy walked in a line through the room, stopped to admire everything and then took their seats and waited for instructions.

Norvell asked the children to start coloring, and walked around helping and explaining.

"Everyone's coloring, and doing such a good job," he said. "Good work!"

An award for the teacher

Kane of Honeywell said that Norvell's winning lesson plan was not only creative and engaging, but it incorporated activities for older students and local law enforcement. "This is one further step toward further empowering our students and children in the community," he said.

"No doubt the students and faculty here at Oneco Elementary are proud of Mr. Norvell and the work that he's done to raise awareness about such a critical issue," Kane said. "And to give these children potentially life-saving lessons."

While children chattered at their desks and worked on their coloring, Hayes came forward to read a proclamation. When the chatter got a bit loud, Norvell took control.

"Boys and girls, boys and girls, eyes up here, please," he said, and the volume came down.

"Oh, they're having such a good time," Hayes said. "I can see everybody's coloring and they have some new friends already and they're just really looking forward to a great, great year," she said.

Hayes was effusive in her praise of Norvell. "You have just gone above and beyond the role of duty," she said before reading the proclamation praising him. "I know that you have the children's needs at heart but you have gone one step beyond with the Got 2B Safe! Program."



Norvell shows the children the large mural on the wall.

To the children, she said, "Mr. Norvell has spent his summer trying to find out ways to keep you safe and make sure you get a good education. And I'm so proud to be here."

A happy man and his family

When he found out he won, Norvell said he was elated.

"It was unexpected and it was just so nice," he said. As for the classroom, he added, "It's beautiful. I love it. It's going to be effective and it's going to help to teach."

Norvell's wife, Julie, walked around and helped out with a few of the kids. She was thrilled that her husband won the makeover.

"I thought it was pretty amazing because you don't usually win a lot of things," she said. "You enter a lot of things, grants or anything like that. It was pretty remarkable that he won and could do this for the kids and do this for the school as well."

Julie Norvell said Matt has a way with children.

"He's very even-keeled and does very well with kids. He has a lot of patience and a lot of endurance. A lot of love for these kids. He'll do well this year," she said. They moved to Clearwater from Bradenton, and Matt commutes every day. "He loves this school and loves these kids, and he wanted to stay at this school."



Norvell oversees the work of the children in his classroom.

Susan Leonard, Julie Norvell's mother, said Matt has a gift for teaching.

"I was a librarian and I came down to read to his kids, and I was just amazed," she said. "He has ideas, he keeps them motivated. For somebody to take 18 to 20 kids and keep them all going in the right way and have them enjoy it is really remarkable. It's a gift. And he loves it."

Honeywell's Kane said it was part of the company's efforts to get closer to the communities.

"Partnering with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Honeywell wanted to determine how to get closer to the communities and to the children," he said. "The smiles on their face, the new stuff that they have. It's just a great feeling to see that."

Well-deserved recognition

McGonegal said the whole classroom makeover was just, well, awesome, and that Norvell is a major asset to the county's school system.

"I think it's great to have a role model, a male kindergarten teacher as well," he said. "A lot of these kids need a role model in their lives and Matt provides that model, and we're really proud of him."

Hayes, whose children work in education, said she was very impressed with Norvell and his interactions with and hard work for the children.

"These children are just wonderful, but the biggest accolade should go to Mr. Norvell, who spent his summer working on this safety program for the children," she said. "It goes to show that he just not only is a wonderful, outstanding teacher with a brilliant future ahead of him, but he loves these children so much that he wants to make sure that they're safe in school as well as out of school."

Ready to begin the school year

Soon, it was time for the adults to leave Norvell's classroom and for the education to begin.

He's excited about the school year, and it was easy to see how eager he was to get started.

"I'm excited to have brand-new students, and I'm ready to just get them learning and get them on the road to education," he said. "This is exactly what I thought about," he said when asked if this was the image of teaching he had. "I wanted to effect change in their lives. I wanted to show them what it means to be a good student, a good person, to have character and integrity, and be safe. I always wanted them to be safe."