

BETWEEN THE LINES

By SOPHIE BONOMI

Ropers just jump in

POULSBO — What timeless toy can burn more than 200 calories in 20 minutes, fit inside a backpack and costs less than \$5?



The Bainbridge Island Rope Skippers showed Poulsbo Elementary School students exactly what the jump rope was all about — and the unique ways they could use it, Dec. 14.

For a team that's jumped twice for more than 50 million people tuned in to watch the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, performing for the elementary school was no sweat. But their activity — advanced jump-roping choreographed to music, was an extreme acceleration of the Double Dutch sessions I saw on the playground as a kid.

I recall fondly an afternoon at recess when I was in elementary school. I appreciated jump rope as it wasn't competitive, there were no teams — just mind over matter. You and the rope; all you needed was a little bit of rhythm and coordination.

I lacked both. Double Dutch. I was next. The two ropes seemed to hit the ground like a metronome: 1 — 2 — 3 — 4. It was time to jump; I was holding up the line. The pressure was mounting. Beads of sweat formed on my brow and I hadn't even begun moving yet. I took a deep breath and tried to hop in, cautiously as not to damage rhythm of the swinging lines. Fail. I tripped over my own shoelace, or maybe it was one of the ropes,

'Mr. Automatic' wows Poulsbo crowd



Former Seahawks placekicker Norm Johnson visits seniors through '12 Days of Goodness'

BY SOPHIE BONOMI
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POULSBO — As "Silent Night" was played on the piano in Martha and Mary's chapel, the room began to fill with idle chatter as residents, staff, and even Sunshine, a small,

Norm Johnson holds a football while talking to residents about his days in the NFL, Dec. 14.

long-haired dog, filed in for a seat by the podium, Dec. 14.

Studies indicate that 60 percent of those in long-term care facilities won't receive regular visits from others. Former Seahawks placekicker Norm Johnson is doing his part to change that through the "12 Days of Goodness" campaign — encouraging football fans to bring cheer to seniors this holiday season for the 12 days leading up until Christmas.

"As you can imagine, our

residents, and staff are really excited about this event," said Jennifer Bailey, Martha & Mary's communications and outreach coordinator.

Johnson's participation in the campaign was a result of organizers partnering with the NFL Alumni Association and its Pro Football Legends organization to coordinate visits from former players to senior care facilities nationwide.

Although Johnson has visited with residents of other care facilities, he said,

"I think having a group of people doing a more forum-type conversation was better controlled."

The hour-long meet-and-greet with residents and staff gave them enough time to ask Johnson questions about his experiences in and out of the NFL, and receive autographs. This

visit to Martha & Mary was the only one scheduled in Kitsap County.

Residents asked these questions.

"Have you ever had any kicks blocked?"

"Yes, I've had field goals blocked. Some were prob-

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Right, Joyce Otterby smiles as she holds an autograph from Norm Johnson. Below, Norm Johnson meets staff and residents while he signs autographs after his presentation at Martha and Mary, Dec. 14.

Sophie Bonomi / Herald



Automatic

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ably my fault. And others, some people made mistakes on the line."

"Did you have kids that played football?"

"I have three boys but none of them kicked. In fact, only one played football."

"Did you ever get seriously hurt while playing?"

"You learn kind of early to keep your head on a swivel I was really fortunate not to get clobbered. But I got clobbered a lot in my college days."

Johnson spoke about the new drama/sport film "Concussion," in theaters Dec. 25.

"I think it will put the NFL in a bad light, but they probably deserve it ... Safety and concussion patrol is a very good thing for the safety of our players," he said.

Johnson played for 18 years in the NFL, including eight seasons as a placekicker for the Seahawks (1982-1990). As a reliable placekicker for the team, Johnson earned the nickname, "Mr. Automatic."

"I think I know how I got that nickname," said Johnson, "It was Pro Bowl second season, there were a bunch of field goals, and in

the headlines the newspapers wrote, 'Mr. Automatic' — the name just kind of stuck for a while."

He retired in 1999 and began to call Kitsap home in 2000. Almost 16 years later, he still ranks as one of the all-time leading scorers in NFL history.

Some questions to Johnson were thought-provoking.

"What was it like transitioning out of play and into society?"

"There [are] 401k's that have the guys set up pretty well, but back when I played, some guys made a lot of money but not everyone ... After 18 seasons of playing, I went back into the work force as a 40-year-old — competing for jobs against people who have spent the last 18 seasons training for them."

He described showing his resume to potential employers. "If I went to show someone my resume, it said, 'Seattle Seahawks.' Playing for many years, I was behind the career lapse."

"What are some life lessons you have learned?"

Johnson said, "It would have been smarter for me to keep in contact and network with a lot of those guys. As you get older, having friends and contacts in



your network is a pretty important thing."

The residents seemed to agree.

Johnson signed autographs on footballs, jerseys, and Martha & Mary brochures. Even Sunshine, the little dog, got a silver signature on his 12th Man leash.

"We couldn't be more pleased to host the legendary Mr. Johnson at our facility," said resident life director Tracie Walthall. "Many of our residents are huge Seahawks fans and this visit brought lots of smiles."

Johnson agreed, "This is pretty cool. I like this program they put on. This was a great event here today."

To learn more about 12 Days of Goodness, go to 12daysofgoodness.com.

"So far we're in three or four big NFL cities," said Johnson. "But they're trying to grow this nationally."

Above, Norm Johnson at Martha & Mary, Dec. 14. Below, students watch the B.I. Rope skippers.

Sophie Bonomi / Herald



Bonomi

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and was hit in the face by the other one. My glasses flew off my face. With a sprained ankle and another broken pair of spectacles, I decided to put my athletic ambitions on hold.

However, for the Bainbridge Island rope skippers, novice issues like finding footing and rhythm weren't a concern. The team was trained to jump, skip, and hop with abandon — and make it look easy.

The students at Poulsbo Elementary School were enthralled, as they watched the team cross, skip, and double-dutch across the gymnasium. Performing to popular pop songs like, "Dynamite" by Taio Cruz.

"This isn't just a one-time thing, we want to see you jump rope more often," Principal Claudia Alves told the students at the assembly.

The team performed two assemblies with an objec-

tive to show the students the wide range of modern possibilities the traditional jump rope had.

"We brought the team in today to show you all the things you can do with a jumprope," Alves said.

She said a shipment of four long jump ropes have been ordered, and "we've got scads of short ones."

In an attempt to get the kids exercising and further engaged at recess, Alves said between tetherball, four-square, and now jumprope, the kids will be more active.

"We wanted to give them another activity so they're not just wandering, if they've got something to do their going to be much more engaged," said Alves.

Next up on the list for the Poulsbo Elementary students: Hopscotch.

Perhaps I should have tried that one instead.

— Sophie Bonomi is sports and education reporter for the Herald. 360-779-4464, sbonomi@northkitsapherald.com.

SCHEDULES

BOYS BASKETBALL

Dec. 18

Bremerton at Kingston, 7 p.m.

Dec. 19

Kingston at Lakeside High School, 5 p.m.

Dec. 22

Kingston at Gig Harbor High School, 7 p.m.

Dec. 18

North Kitsap at North Mason High School, 7 p.m.

Dec. 19

Bonney Lake at. North Kitsap High School, 7 p.m.

Dec. 21

North Kitsap at Clover Park High School, 5 p.m.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Dec. 18

Kingston at Bremerton High School, 7 p.m.

Dec. 18

North Kitsap at North Kitsap High School, 7 p.m.

Dec. 19

Bainbridge at North Kitsap High School, 3:30 p.m.

Dec. 22

Rogers (Puyallup) at North Kitsap High School, 7 p.m.

GIRLS WRESTLING

Dec. 19

Kingston at Hammerhead Invite at Kitsap Pavilion, 9 a.m.



STANDINGS

BOYS SWIM

	Conf.			Overall		
	W	L	T	W	L	T
North Kitsap	2	0	0	2	0	0
Port Angeles	1	0	0	3	2	0
Olympic	1	1	0	1	1	0
Kingston	1	0	0	1	1	0
Klahowya	0	1	0	0	1	0
Sequim	0	1	0	0	1	0
Bremerton	0	2	0	0	2	0

BOYS BASKETBALL

	Conf.		Overall	
	W	L	W	L
North Kitsap	2	0	5	1
Bremerton	1	0	3	4
North Mason	0	1	4	3
Olympic	0	2	3	4
Port Angeles	2	0	4	2
Kingston	1	1	3	2
Sequim	0	2	3	3

GIRLS BASKETBALL

	Conf.		Overall	
	W	L	W	L
Bremerton	1	0	2	2
Kingston	1	1	2	3
North Mason	0	1	5	2
Olympic	1	1	3	1
Port Angeles	2	0	7	0
Sequim	0	2	2	3
North Kitsap	1	1	2	3