



Classifieds	Page 4
Movies	Page 10
Obituaries	Page 8
Puzzles	Page 11
Worship	Page 2

Fatal workplace injuries decline Page 12



Volunteers build new school playground

By Jess Paniszczyn

Of all the hours spent at school in the course of becoming educated, many people might well report that their favorite 'class' was lunch with recess running a close second. Those free hours of childhood spent fighting over swings or playing chase around the monkey bars are some of the most precious produced by a number of school

systems regardless of whether they are private, public or alternative schools.

Parents, teachers, staff and community volunteers worked together to build the 775 students of the Universal Academy charter school's Irving campus a new 2,450 square foot playground on Oct. 10. The playground features a driving panel, adaptive swing

seat, funnel adventure tube, rock blocks climbing wall and outside learning benches.

"A wonderful transformation started this morning," said Darwin Hurme, AVP, NAA Sales for Foresters, a primary financial and volunteer contributor to the playground. "Well over 250 volunteers showed up this morning. Shortly after 8:30 a.m. we started to put the build together, broke up into teams,

and by 2:30 p.m. it's going to be complete. When the kids come here, they are going to be so surprised to see what we have done in one day.

"The playground looks fantastic. I think there are a bunch of young engineers attending Universal Academy, because the design they put together is terrific. I can't wait to see the completed project. I can just see it going up in pieces.

There are climbing walls, some high beam - I'm not sure what that is - and tunnels. It is just wonderful.

"The kids got together and had a design day on Aug. 12. Then we put the plans together and volunteers build the playground. But it is their design. What they saw on paper and what they actually get

See *SCHOOL*, Page 3

Dog attack leaves family questioning ordinances

By Jess Paniszczyn

A recent, vicious attack by two dogs left a dog seriously injured and its owners shaken. Spurred to action by the assault on his family, one Irving citizen wants the City Council to strengthen animal ordinances to help protect everyone.

"My wife was attacked while walking our two little corgis on Sep. 29," Dana Von Voss said. "On

Tuesday evening about 6:45 p.m., all the sudden I heard this screaming. I ran out the door and saw two large black dogs running away from my wife. The neighbors were out, and everyone was yelling and screaming.

"My wife picked up one of the corgis trying to protect it. The other corgi went forward trying to protect her. The loose dogs pulled our corgi out of its collar. Our vet said if our dog had not been a corgi, it would not have survived. Corgis are very low to the ground. Because of our dog's girth and weight, the other dogs couldn't pick it up. The punctures went all the way through. The attacking dog completely closed its mouth on our dog.

See *AT LARGE*, Page 5



Working for the fun of it, volunteers steadily make progress while building a new playground for the Universal Academy's Irving campus.

Studios at Las Colinas jumps into *The Deep End*

By Jess Paniszczyn

The Studios at Las Colinas, part of the Dallas Communications Complex, is the home of a new

television series, *The Deep End*.

"*The Deep End* is a law firm drama," said Justin Muller of Muler Entertainment, which man-

ages The Studios at Las Colinas. "It is described as *Grey's Anatomy* meets *L.A. Law*. The story is about young attorneys being thrown into the deep end or the rat race of a Los Angeles law firm.

"*The Deep End* is a mid-season replacement show for ABC. We have a green light for six episodes. This show will replace something, so we don't know where it will be in the line up yet. Twentieth Century Fox is producing the show for ABC Entertainment Group.

"One of the reasons we are here is that Texas is a great place to shoot. The cost factor here

verses that of shooting in Los Angeles is also a reason. The state is offering a film incentive. If a producer comes to our state, hires a crew and spends money in Texas, based on how much the production spends, they receive a cash incentive."

The local City government also worked to bring a new production to the Studios.

"Mayor Gears offered a local incentive for a production to come here. The Communications Center was listed as one of the under utilized assets of the City, because we were sitting vacant. It was very

See *PRODUCTION*, Page 7



The cast and crew of *The Deep End* prepare to shoot a scene on location near the intersection of MacArthur and Rochelle.

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Academy filmmakers recognized nationally

Karen Hernandez, junior, and Tommee Peeravong, senior, both at Jack E. Singley Academy, were selected to participate in student productions sponsored by Fresh Films.

Hernandez was a member of the all-teen production crew for the Fresh Films summer short film contest. Hernandez joined 10 other Dallas-area

teens in the production of "Small Town Heroes", a short comedy with a super heroes theme. The team won second place in a national contest sponsored by Fresh Films.

Peeravong will participate in the 2009 National Guard Doc Program. The program will give high school student filmmakers professional training and

guidance to create a full-length documentary in just five days. Peeravong will travel to Austin to work on production of his team's film Oct. 22-28.

Hernandez and Peeravong will discuss their respective experiences, and will showcase their films at American Film Institute Dallas International Film Festival in spring 2010.



Tommee Peeravong and Karen Hernandez

School recognizes the importance of play

Continued from page 1

to run, jump and play on is going to be a completely different experience for them," he said.

Despite the cool temperatures and constant threat of rain, there was an air of excitement and purpose among the volunteers building the new playground.

"This playground is much larger than anything we have had," said Diane Harris, Universal's Chief Education Officer and Superintendent. "It is taking up several different sections, because there are different stations. There are even outside learning benches where the kids can go outside and do some class work with nature or eat their lunches.

"Building the playground is wonderful team building. Our par-

ents are very supportive. To take a Saturday, because most of our parents have to work and with this economy being what it is, shows their dedication and commitment to the school and to their children. That is what I really admire today. We have had 175 parents up here today. That is amazing.

"Yesterday, our people were out there in the rain preparing the site. That is how dedicated our staff is. Our crew has all pulled together for the good of the kids."

Unstructured play is important to all children.

"Play is crucial to a child's developmental process; that is research based. When kids play, it is so effective in getting them to learn. It opens up their brain. It

stimulates them to think. They can do problem solving on the logistical items that are there for the kids.

"Many times in our society we downplay the practice of play. The research is real clear, kids need to have time to just play. We are so academically oriented many times that we forget kids have to have time to be kids, and play with unstructured play. Kids need to have things to climb on where they build muscles and become physically fit. You have to have mental, physical fitness in order to have the whole child," she said.

KaBOOM!, a national non-profit that helps communities build playgrounds was instrumental in making the new playground a reality.

"Our vision is that there would be a safe place to play within walking distance of every child in America," said Nora Donaldson, project manager for KaBOOM! "It is a big vision. We are attacking it a playground at a time.

"If we just came out and built a playground with people who build playgrounds all the time and

none of the community was involved, that is still great. But at the end of the day, you wouldn't have people feeling ownership over that playground. People wouldn't say, 'I built this for my kids. I'm going to take care of it.' Kids wouldn't say, 'Look what my mom did. She spent her Saturday building this for me.'"



Pointing the way, playground construction volunteers try to figure out their next move.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

October 17

Oktoberfest Fundraiser - VFW 2494 Irving and the Ladies Auxiliary will hold an Oktoberfest fundraiser at the Post from noon until 7 p.m. The day's activities will include German food, a white elephant sale, bake sale, silent auction, 50/50 raffle, games and much more. All proceeds from this fundraiser will go toward expenses for Erika Minshall to join a school-sponsored trip to Germany. Erika is a member of the Ladies Auxiliary of Post 2494 and 3 times Past President of the Junior Girls Unit. The public is invited to this event. VFW Post 2494 is located at 3375 Belt Line road, just south of Shady Grove. For directions and further information, call the Post at 972-790-1611.

October 17 - 18 at 10am

"The Great Pumpkin Patch" - Creekview PTSA is hosting "The Great Pumpkin Patch" featuring pumpkins, pumpkins and more pumpkins, and a bake sale. The event will be held in the Old Kroger Parking lot, at the southeast corner of Frankford and Old Denton Road, near KFC. The Sale will start at 10:00 am on Sat. and 1:00 pm on Sun. and ends at 5:00 pm on both days. All proceeds will benefit the Creekview PTSA Post Prom. For more information, contact Cindy King 214-315-4480 or Karen McDaniel at 972-245-5287.

October 17 at 8pm

Starry, Starry Night - Irving Chorale's first concert of its 23rd season will complement the Irving Arts Center's NASA | ART: 50 Years of Exploration exhibition at 8 p.m. in the Carpenter Performance Hall. Presentation features music about the universe - the stars, moon and earth. \$10-20, 972-252-2787 or www.irvingartscenter.com for tickets

October 18 from 2 to 6pm

100 years for Texas PTA Texas Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) will be having a 100th birthday celebration from 2-6 p.m. at the Cotton Bowl during the State Fair of Texas. Tickets for the celebration are \$15 for one or \$12.50 for four or more, and include admission to the fair. Activities include stage entertainment, bounce houses, science activities, Texas author book signings, balloon sculptures, and face painting. For more information, access www.txpta.org/events.

October 19 at 7pm

Genealogical Society - The Irving Genealogical Society meets at 7:00 p.m. at the Irving Public Library, 801 West Irving Blvd., the IGS is host to guest speaker Donald Raney. Mr. Raney will detail the life of Martin Varner, a Texas Pioneer who traveled by flatboat down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to Arkansas Territory in 1815. Visitors are welcome.

October 20 from 6 to 8pm

Make Your Home Healthy - Learn about alternatives to house-

hold chemicals and their common applications in household maintenance from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Southwest Branch Library, 2216 W. Shady Grove Road. Students also will hear discussions about the cause, effects and prevention of indoor air pollution.

October 20 at 7pm

The Big Read: Matthew Pearl - The Irving Public Library presents a free discussion and book signing featuring Matthew Pearl, author of *The Poe Shadow* at 7 p.m. in Dupree Theater. Pearl's presentation is part of Irving Public Library's Big Read program, a month-long, community-wide event that encourages people to read, discuss and celebrate a selection from American literature. Irving Library selected Edgar Allan Poe as this year's author.

October 21 from 4 to 8pm

Spirit Night - The Chick-fil-A at Las Colinas will host a fundraising event 4:00pm - 8:00 pm at 5350 N. MacArthur Blvd. Enjoy good food, have some fun, and help support Lone Star Youth Orchestra.

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