

## Circus time!

### CIRCUS

#### Sharon Academy students learn skills for life

By Christian Avard

Standard Staff

SHARON – Sharon Academy middle school students performed their talents last Friday at the annual carnival and circus.

The big top event is a long-time tradition at Sharon Academy going back 18 years, according to the Academy's Middle School Director Andrew Lane.

Every spring, seventh and eighth students take two weeks off from school to organize an event that provides them with skills for life.

The carnival and circus are designed by the students, Lane said. They make the arcade games at the carnival, the stage and props for the circus, and they perform in the actual circus.

Forty students from grades seven and eight grade classes performed in the carnival and circus. They produced the performance, participated in the juggling, balancing, and acrobatics.

"It's become a legacy or significant part of what we do as a community," said Lane. "It's also for us a great illustration of living our values and mission. We want to help students be their best selves and make a difference in the world."

Every year, students

pick the theme. This year's theme was science.

The circus opened up with scientists doing experiments with rats, but the rodents escaped. They caused havoc for the scientists, sabotaged their experiments and pest control, and could not be caught.

In between the acts, students performed a variety of tricks. They juggled on balance boards and yoga balls. They jumped rope, walked on stilts, and rode unicycles.

Eighth grader Jason Pratte was tasked with juggling two lit torches. He juggled the torches over and over to the delight of the audience. When he finished, he received a thunderous applause.

After the performance, Pratte said it only took him four days to juggle fire torches. He said the act was nerve-wracking, but he went with it and succeeded.

"I burnt myself during dress rehearsal," Pratte said. "The experience was fun and awesome. I will miss this tomorrow. I'm going to miss it all."

Up to 250 parents, children, teachers and residents jammed the Sharon Academy gymnasium to watch the circus. Sitting on one of the benches were three alumni Sean Kelly, Jamie Potter, and Kenneth Lyman.

They were awed by Pratte's performance. Although Kelly, Potter and Lyman are upperclassmen now, they came to the performance because it reminded them of the fun they had performing in the circus years ago.

"It was pretty good," Kelly said. "We unicycled and walked on stilts. But we never got to juggle fire."

When asked if they missed performing the circus, the three freshmen collectively said "yes."

Leah Holmes, now a freshman at Sharon Academy, echoed Kelly, Potter, and Lyman's responses "There's a lot of teamwork because we're all learning skills," Holmes said. "I sat there watching the show, and my eyes were watering. I wanted to be in it again."

Troy Wunderle of Wun-

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**Maple Moore, leader of the lab rats, holds up a poster of what the Mad Scientists have planned for them while Phoebe Quackenbos reacts, right.**

Rick Russell Photo



**Desmond Rikert, 4, poses in a clown cutout for his grandmother**

**Lauri Hudson on the midway before the performance.**

Rick Russell Photo



**Ella Stainton, left, and another acrobat tumble across the ring while forming a human wheel.**

Rick Russell Photo

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**From Page 1C** derle Big Top Adventures was the artist-in-residence for the performance at Sharon Academy. Wunderle taught students how to perform, how to juggle, how to walk on stilts, and, more importantly, how to perform as a team.

According to Wunderle, the skills the students learn go well beyond juggling, “A program like this teaches grit, the need and the ability to accept and the benefits of failure,” Wunderle said. “If you’re paying attention to what’s causing you to fail, and you alter it, you succeed and the success is supported

and cheered on by community.”

In the end, the scientists and pest control capture the rats. But before they dispose of them, a scientist asks, “Why can’t we all get along?”

They concluded the performance dancing to songs like “Macarena,” “Watch me,” and “Cotton-eyed Joe.” They also got together in groups and formed several pyramids to close the show.

Sharon middle schoolers Daygon Lashua and Beckett Lapp breathed a sigh of relief after the show. They made it.

Like Pratte and the alumni, Lashua and Lapp said they’ll miss the circus.

“I learned new skills like hand and eye coordination and balance,” Lashua said.

For Lapp, it was about connections he made with other middle schoolers.

“It helps working with people a lot more than you don’t work with. You get to reach out a little more than you would in school.”



**Kyanna Blodgett takes in cheers for her hula hoop routine.**

Rick Russell Photo

