

Ikidarod is hit with Foersterling's fifth-grade students

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - St. Mary's elementary teacher Jessica Foersterling uses innovative ways to inspire her fifth-grade students. On Monday, she conducted an activity that has become tradition for her classes called the “Ikidarod.”

This activity went along with the classroom's study of the Iditarod, a 1,049-mile sled /dog race in Alaska.

“Thirty fifth-graders were broken up into six teams,” Foersterling said. “One student acted as the team's ‘musher,’ and the other students were ‘dogs.’ Each musher was pulled in a wagon by his or her ‘dogs.’ Students had to check in and out of seven checkpoints, where they did a variety of tasks.”



The teacher said tasks included solving math problems, answering Iditarod trivia, feeding “dogs” popcorn and changing dog booties. The winner of this year's Ikidarod was Team Kane. Team Kane included Matthew Kane (musher), Andrew Roth, Connor Wieckhorst, Lily Thaxton and Caroline Rea.

The Iditarod race started in 1967 and 1969 in Alaska, but eventually popularity was lost. A man named Joe Redington never lost interest and grew it into a race now known all over the world. A new long-distance race started in 1973. Redington's goals were to save the sled dog culture and the Alaskan huskies and also preserve the historical Iditarod and he did it.

The “Ikidarod” served as a culminating activity to the students' two-week study of the Iditarod. Along with this activity, the kids will write letters to the real Iditarod mushers

they tracked during the race. Most mushers write a letter back to the kids, and many even send trading cards and dog booties their dogs used in the race.

Foersterling has been doing this unit with her fifth-grade students since she began teaching that level eight years ago.





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