

Strength in action: Red Ribbon Week spreads positive, drug-free messages at Goshen Elementary

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
October 28 2016 7:00 AM





EDWARDSVILLE - This week has been a whirlwind of fun and positive education at **Goshen Elementary School**.

In honor of the school's Red Ribbon Week festivities, several different speakers including **Edwardsville High School** students, **Rich Grogan, Kick'n-Life Guru from Grogan's Academy of Martial Arts** and even **McGruff the Crime Dog** took the time to spread messages of respect, friendship and pledge to be drug-free.

Goshen Elementary Principal **Mary Miller** has been sharing photographs of the kindergarten through second graders' activities throughout the week on the school's Facebook page and is excited about Red Ribbon Week.

"This week has been full of visitors," Principal Miller said about this week's festivities. "Everybody is sending the same message of making good choices, being safe, making healthy choices and being respectful."

On Thursday, members of the EHS boys' basketball, girls' basketball, girls' soccer and dance team arrived at Goshen to show off some of their athletic skills and of course, spread the overarching principles of Red Ribbon Week.

The dance team shared that students must maintain a healthy lifestyle and remain drug-free to be able to do all of the fun activities they have the opportunity to do, including their trip to Nationals in **Walt Disney World**. They also performed their dance routine for the crowd.



As he continues to attract national attention, All-American and three-sport dynamo **A.J. Epenesa**, along with other members of the basketball team, took the time to give back to their community in a positive way: spreading messages of respect, hard work, friendship and good sportsmanship.

"It's really fun," Epenesa said. "These kids look up to us a lot so it's really fun to come out here and to know that we mean so much to them and that we can impact them. We come out here and try to give them a good time."

Dustin Battas, head coach of EHS's junior varsity boys' basketball team, kicked off the boys' basketball portion of the assembly by sharing the teams' hopes for the season, all the while relating back to the original message of respect and acceptance.

"Our boys and girls teams have a really good chance of being really good this year," Battas said. "The reason that we have a chance to be really good this year is that we have really good kids. We have good players, but more importantly, they're good to each other."

Battas also shared the message that people should be accepted no matter how large, small, talented or strong. For his example, Battas shared that even though senior guard **Jackson Best** isn't the tallest basketball player on the team, he is certainly one of the strongest. The feat of his strength was showcased as he did push-ups with not one, but two elementary school students on his back.

