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CAMERA-READY

YES NEWS



Montgomery fourth-graders film program for NJN



Staff photos by Kathy Johnson

Top, Sierra Watkins, left, and Eric Wang, fourth-graders at Village Elementary School in Montgomery, are videotaped yesterday for an upcoming NJN "Classroom Close-up" segment. Above, reporter/producer Kate Megargee, with cameraman Ed Waters, right, and sound technician Nello Ciccone, talk to the students.

By PAMELA SROKA-HOLZMANN
Staff Writer

MONTGOMERY — Village Elementary School fourth-graders first found success behind the camera as television broadcasters for a school morning news program.

Now, they've found success in front of the camera in an Emmy-award winning show produced by the New Jersey Education Association and NJN Public Television.

The program, titled, "Classroom Close-up" is scheduled to air on the NJN network at 7 p.m. Feb. 2, at 9 a.m. Feb. 7, at 7 p.m. March 9 and at 9 a.m. March 14.

The 30-minute weekly series features students, teachers and communities in the state who

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create and participate in successful school projects and events. Season highlights include arts education, conflict resolution and literacy programs. The show is in its 15th year, is the winner of seven Emmy awards and airs about 20 programs a year, said Wanda Swanson, executive producer for Classroom Close-up.

Since 2005, about 360 Village Elementary School students have been providing news each morning to about 36 classrooms under the direction of computer resource teacher Jim Dolan. Each classroom at the school, which houses grades three and

WHAT YOU CAN DO

For more information on the news program or to view the segments, visit the school's Web site at www.mtsd.k12.nj.us/villagees. For more information on Classroom Close-up, visit <http://www.njn.net/television/njnseries/classroomcloseup/>

four, is equipped with a television at the school, he said.

"Every student in fourth grade who wants to take part in the program has an opportunity," Dolan said. "And the third graders look forward to fourth grade so they can become part of it."

The 3- to 4-minute morning news segments include poetry, word of the day, information on hot lunch, upcoming activities, foreign-language translations and ways to promote such char-

acter education traits as respect, honesty, responsibility, friendship, leadership and trust. The students relay weather updates from equipment called "Weather Bug" stationed outside the school building such as a rain gauge and an anemometer.

The student anchors — sitting in front of a blue "VES" backdrop — also led their classmates in the Pledge of Allegiance and proudly stated their pick for the World Series, by chanting, "Go Phillies."

In May 2006, about four pupils also visited the set of Channel 12 news in Edison and were able to tour the grounds, watch a live broadcast and meet a news anchor. Dolan said, "It showed them how real scripts are developed."

The efforts of the fourth graders landed them a spot on Classroom Closeup because the news program is "unique" to statewide elementary schools, Swanson said yesterday in a telephone interview.

"The focus of the show is great things are happening in public schools — from kindergarten to community college," she said.

Yesterday, television crews arrived at the school to interview four of the school's regular student anchors: Sierra Watkins, 9; Eric Wang, 9; Jeffrey Bi, 9; and Jillian Yang, 9. All said they were excited to see themselves on Classroom Close-up.

Principal Susan Lacy said the students through the program have learned self-confidence, public speaking and team coop-

eration. She said several teachers, parents and staff members, including Vice Principal Al Hadinger all have helped in the success of the program.

In addition, Dolan said a \$3,500 grant received in January 2006 from the school's Parent Teacher Association — which during the period immediately prior to the grant coordinated several fundraisers — has funded video equipment needed for the news program. In the future, he would like to begin utilizing Teleprompter software, he said.

The Village Elementary School news program airs Fridays on local Channel 14 and on the Village Elementary School's Web site.

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