

Do you have a meeting place?

Kids were asked this question and more at fire safety day

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COVENTRY—Kids in Coventry are still learning to be cool about fire safety and still learning what the most important things are to remember in the event of a fire.

Captain Bill Hall of the Central Coventry Fire District has been the public education officer there for eight years.

He brings and educational program to more than 700 kids every year, presenting at Washington Oak Elementary School, Father John V. Doyle School on South Main Street and the half a dozen private day-cares also in the district.

Hall visits the school with members of the newly created public education team. In its first year and with 12 members of the district already trained their aim is to not only educate the public, but also educate themselves by taking classes. "They are all really dedicated," Hall said, "and they are great with the kids."

They take over a week to present to all the

grades at Washington Oak, even leaving time for each student to have a chance spray the fire hose on one of their trucks.

The "Be Cool About Fire Safety" video from Allstate Insurance, though now 15 years old, still keeps the kids engaged, with the famous song by the same name. Hall said he has seen the kids who have seen the video multiple times singing along. Yet, they still watch it every time.

This group of second graders laughed and followed along with Gilbert Gottfried as the voice of the smoke detector.

Hall said there are certain things that they cover each year like not playing with matches and smoke detectors. Other staples are fall and crawl and stop, drop and roll.

Each year Hall goes back he meets new kids and sees kids he's gotten to know so he tries to pull out new and specific things to hit home with them.

This year when Hall visited the students at Washington Oak the two things he wanted to make sure they remembered were first, the importance of having a meeting place in the event of a fire and second, the importance of having orderly fire drills in school.

Hall asked the fireman with him, Private Steve Winsor, what is the first question we ask when we get to a fire?

"Is everybody out?" Winsor answered.

Having a meeting place will help a family determine quickly if everyone is there and ac-

counted for. He showed the kids how each member of the family might go out different doors or even windows and not end up on the same side of the house. If there is a meeting place, there will be no question of where to go once someone has left the home.

The answer to the question, "Is everybody out?" is going to determine how they attack the fire, Hall explained. If someone is not accounted for they will have to go into search and rescue mode, Hall said, and there will be a little bit of a delay in putting water on the fire. "We can spend precious minutes looking for someone who does not need to be rescued," he said.

The Coventry Substance Abuse Task Force has also given the group tobacco prevention materials that they have incorporated into their discussion about not playing with matches or lighters.

He tries to get to the schools early in the year and then will stop by to have lunch with the kids or go to recess to follow-up with them. "We try to be as much a part of the community as we can be," Hall said.

Their homework assignment at the end of the presentation is to go home and ask their parents or guardians if they have a meeting place.

However, Hall said, "We are perfectly happy putting ourselves out of business." "It would be fine if we never went to another fire," he said, "especially when children are involved."



Angelena Chapman/Daily Times

Captain Bill Hall and Pvt. Steve Winsor give a demonstration on fire safety at Washington Oak school.



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At far left, students in Coventry watch as a fireman crawls along the floor as part of a demonstration for fire safety. Center, students take part in a fire drill and get to enjoy some sunshine, too. Above, each member of the class was given a chance to spray the fire hose.