

A fire safety lesson from a Dalmatian

A firefighter and her dog teach children fire-safety tips

BY SARA PLUMMER
World Staff Writer

Sparkles started out as a family pet. But not even a week after adopting her, firefighter Dayna Hilton was testing the Dalmatian to see if she could get low and crawl on the ground.

Now Hilton and Sparkles, who are from Arkansas, travel all over the country teaching and demonstrating fire safety procedures to children — such as getting low and crawling.

The pair were at Celia Clinton Elementary School on Monday conducting fire safety programs for students.

Principal Tanya Davis said the school always teaches fire safety, but this was a much bigger presentation.

"This is something extra special," Davis said. "It makes a bigger impression. Most children learn visually and they can make a connection between safety and Sparkles."

Hilton, who has done fire public education since 2002, said it definitely helps having Sparkles along.

"They're more attentive when she's with me than if I were up there just talking by myself," she said.

A member of the Rotary Club of Tulsa, which is a Partner in Education with Celia Clinton, Davis is a friend of Hilton's and arranged the visit, she said. The Rotary Club also purchased Hilton's book about Sparkles and fire safety for each student at the school.

"It's in their homes and their parents can see it," she said.

Fire safety tips

- Stay away from hot surfaces.
- Use cold water to soothe a burn.
- Stop, drop and roll if clothing catches on fire.
- Know the sound of your smoke alarm and check the batteries twice a year.
- Practice a home fire drill using an escape map.
- Crawl low to the ground under smoke.

Source: tulsaworld.com/sparkles

When Hilton asked the students if they had a designated place to go outside if their home caught fire, only a few hands went up.

"Sometimes it's the first they've heard about it," she said.

Hilton also told the older students to be sure to teach the fire safety tips they learned to younger siblings.

Sparkles, who is 10 years old, never seemed to stop wagging her tail, even after hundreds of students had taken a turn to pet her.

"She loves to be around kids," Hilton said, but Sparkles may not visit many more schools. "I really need to retire her."

Hilton is already training another Dalmatian, Tango, to assist her in the future.

"Fire safety isn't just something you do once a year during Fire Prevention Week," she said. "It's something you need to do all the time."

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Second-grader Karen Albarran, 8, pets Sparkles, a dog who helped teach Celia Clinton Elementary School students about fire safety on Monday. SARA PLUMMER/Tulsa World

Biden's post goes to ex-aide

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — Edward "Ted" Kaufman, a former aide to Sen. Joe Biden, was named Monday by Delaware Gov. Ruth Ann Minner to fill the Senate seat Biden is leaving for the vice presidency.

Kaufman plans to serve until the 2010 election, when a new senator is elected. He said he is comfortable stepping down after two years.

Speculation on Biden's successor had centered in recent weeks on his son, Attorney General Beau Biden. But last week the younger Biden announced that he planned to fulfill his National Guard duties and wouldn't accept an appointment to his father's U.S. Senate seat.

Biden is a prosecutor for the 261st Signal Brigade, which left for Iraq last week. The unit is due back in September 2009, in time for Biden to run for his father's Senate seat.

Biden will be sworn in as vice president on Jan. 6, but in mid-January he will step down from the Senate and Kaufman will be sworn in, Kaufman said.

Kaufman held a senior position in all of Biden's federal campaigns. He served on Biden's Senate staff from 1973 to 1994, including 19 years as chief of staff.

He is a senior lecturing fellow at Duke University and heads a political and management consulting firm.

corrections, clarifications

■ A headline and outline in Monday's World misspelled the first name of rap/hip-hop artist Kanye West.

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