

Children run, jump 'n' throw

By Suzan Holl

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Photos by Keri Wiginton



Mason Cutright, a 10-year-old Ridgeway Elementary School student, is congratulated after winning a third-place medal with teammate Ridge Kojack, 9, in the Run, Jump 'n' Throw Ridgeway Invitational at Ridgeway Elementary School in Severn.

Students from Meade Heights and three other Anne Arundel County elementary schools participated in the Navy-sponsored 4th Annual Run, Jump 'n' Throw Ridgeway Invitational May 15 at Ridgeway Elementary School in Severn.

The event partnered special needs children with their nondisabled peers to compete in four events—the 50 meter dash, turbo javelin toss, softball throw and long jump.

In addition to Meade Heights, Ridgeway, Marley and Brock Bridge elementary schools also participated.

At 10 a.m. athletes, teachers and volunteers filed onto the blacktop of the school's outdoor basketball court to sing the Star Spangled Banner as a Navy color guard detail presented colors. As the last note faded into the air, the athletes scattered to the competition areas.

The 50 meter dash was the first event for Meade athletes Victor Martinez, 12, and his partner Brendan White, 11. White ran first and then Martinez, who is wheel chair-bound, took his place at the starting line. Martinez gave it his all and although he was last to finish, he was grinning from ear to ear.

"I'm exhausted," he said between breaths. "But I hope I achieve my goal to at least get something [an award] today," he said.

White said he thought his pal did a good job in the race. "He is one of my best friends and I think we will both do good today," he said.

Meade Heights had 38 students participating in the event, according to vice principal Barbara Church.

"This is the first year we've participated," said Church. "And we couldn't have done it without the help of teachers and volunteers," she said.

Church added that many of Meade's volunteers were members of the 902nd Military Intelligence Group, the school's Partners in Education unit.

Across the field, one such volunteer, 902nd MI member Maj. Ed Barrett, was seen walking with Meade student Zack Bowman, 10. Barrett said Bowman did an outstanding job in the softball throw.

"He threw the ball 6 feet 3 inches," Barrett exclaimed. Bowman smiled. He was using a walker to make his way through the grass. Obviously tiring, Bowman took a few more steps and then stopped. The two were joined by Wendy Nicholson, physical therapist for Anne Arundel County Public Schools. She and Barrett helped Bowman to the turbo javelin toss with lots of smiles and encouragement.

On the sidelines, Ridgeway students cheered for their classmates and the competitors. Ridgeway Assistant Principal Lorra Hobbs said the school's students are very supportive of their disabled and special needs peers.

"The students here are so protective of the special ed kids. They really love and protect them," she said. Hobbs said students will even help feed their special needs classmates. "I've never seen such a thing," Hobbs said. "It's in their heart, it's how they are taught. It really makes you think how blessed we are," she said.

At 12 p.m. an air horn sounded signaling it was time for lunch. Students joined their classmates and headed for their designated eating area.



Roger Reed, center, a 10-year-old Ridgeway Elementary School student, joins classmates in clapping and cheering for those competing in the turbo javelin toss.



Meade Heights Elementary School student Victor Martinez, 12, gives his all in tossing the turbo javelin. Martinez won a fifth-place medal in overall competition.

Meade parent and volunteer Carolyn Palumbo thought the Run, Jump 'n' Throw was a wonderful event.

"I think it was exciting for the kids. It gives them confidence and a chance to be cheered for," she said. Palumbo's daughter, Natalie, 9, is a second-grade student at Meade Heights and was a partner for one of her classmates.

Palumbo said her son is a special needs student in middle school. The Run, Jump 'n' Throw did not exist when he was in elementary school and she was glad her daughter had the opportunity to take part in the program.

"Its nice to see her participate and to use her life experience to help others," Palumbo said.



Kyle Laumann, 10, encourages those participating in the softball throw at the Navy-sponsored 4th Annual Run, Jump 'n' Throw Ridgeway Invitational held at Ridgeway Elementary School in Severn.



Ridgeway student Andrew Aggaboo, right, 11, gets "high-fived" through the fence by fellow students before competing in the long jump event.