

Island Students Celebrate First Day of School Year

This year, 81 students in grades kindergarten through 12 will attend Mackinac Island Public School, up 11 from 70 students last year, with most of those being six new students entering kindergarten.

Island students were eased into the school year Tuesday, September 6, with morning orientation to schedules, school rules, and the student handbook. By noon they were bursting out school doors for a barbecue on the school lawn, kite flying and music, and an inspirational talk by Brett Eastburn, who was born without arms and legs.

The activities instill enthusi-

asm in students for the coming school year.

"We celebrate the first day of school to make it fun," said Barb Fisher, the school secretary.

"We have a good group of kids this year," said Superintendent Jack Dehring. He told students he had high expectations for them.

During the picnic, students ran around the school yard playing games with toys provided by Great Turtle Toys, and were entertained by Mary McGuire Slevin, who sang and played the guitar.

Motivational speaker Brett Eastburn told them there is no medical explanation as to why he was born without arms and legs, but insists he has no handicaps. The 33-year-old Indiana native told students they can do anything they want.

"Kids and adults need to understand their own potential," he said shortly before he began his program. He said he would

Left photograph: Fourth grader Paul Wandrie tests his skill with juggling sticks.

Lower photograph: Motivational speaker Brett Eastburn, who was born with no arms or legs and in 1988 was ranked number four in national wrestling competition, challenges Island seventh grader Robert Chaffee to a match.

use humor to get his message across.

Mr. Eastburn soon had the students laughing. He told them they would see him as a person with no legs and arms at first, but after the hour-long talk, they would see him differently.

"A handicap is a thing, not a person," he said.

Mr. Eastburn travels with his dog, Murray, who retrieves items for him and pulls him in his manual wheelchair. He uses his power chair when he can, but it weighs 300 pounds and can't be transported in some vehicles.

He demonstrated for students how he gets in and out of his wheelchair, opens a can of pop, bounces a basketball, and throws a football with a perfect spiral. He has received numerous awards, including the Ten Outstanding Young Americans by the Junior Chamber of Commerce in 2003, an honor previously given to John F. Kennedy and Bill Clinton.

He admitted that when he was in the seventh grade, he was suicidal, but he has since learned how to get through difficult times and now lives by the creed, "No arms, no legs, no handicaps."

He told students they can do anything they want. If you want to achieve something, but decide you can't do it, he said, you won't.

The best way to approach any goal or task, he said, is to break it down. Too often, people look at the whole project, but if it is taken one step at a time, it becomes doable. He asked students if they thought he just threw a football with a perfect spiral by his third try. He explained that it took a lot of practice and a long time and that he broke it down into steps so he could accomplish his goal.

"I have most of the things I want in life because I have the right attitude," said Mr. Eastburn, who is married and owns a business, No Boundaries, Inc.

His appearance was sponsored by the Mackinac Island Community Foundation, Mackinac Island School Boosters, the



Above photograph: With warm late-summer temperatures blowing across the waters of the Straits, the community enjoyed a picnic, games, and kite flying on the school grounds Tuesday, September 6, to celebrate the start of school. Students attended their first full day of classes Wednesday. Lower photograph: Darren Horn (right) of Great Turtle Toys brought kites and toys to the community picnic celebrating the first day of school. Here, he helps (from left) sixth grader Blake Ruddle, sixth grader Caleb Kolatski, and seventh grader Austin Ruddle add wind socks and tails, also called kite laundry, to a 12-foot Delta kite.

Mackinac Island School Arts Club, Star Line Ferry, and the Lakeview Hotel.

Next on the school agenda is Parent's Day Tuesday, September 13. The information meeting will offer parents insight into what teachers expect

from students and an update on school rules. Parents with children in grades kindergarten through third will meet at 6:30 p.m., grade four through seven parents will meet at 7 p.m., and grade eight through twelve parents will meet at 7:30.



A Grand Sale at Grand Hotel



FIRST IN

Island shoppers waited in line for the doors to open at Grand Hotel's Attic Sale Friday, September 2. They are (from left) Jill Sawatzki, Elaine Murray, Molly Carroll, Marilyn Putz, Jan Sager, Paula Starkweather, and Bonnie Foltz.

FIRST OUT

Emerging just minutes later with arms full of bargains were Lorabeth Fitzgerald (left) and Jane Manoogian.