

The Rochester & Dover Times
Dover, NH
March 2, 2000

Dover kids enjoy DHA lock-in

What had originally been planned as a lock-in for several Dover youths turned out to be a snow-in after the recent Feb. 18 to 19 snowstorm.

While the snow piled up outside the Dover Housing Authority's Seymour Osman Community Center, 46 youths from the Mineral and Whittier Park neighborhood spent the night in a drug-free "lock-in" at the center.

Planned long before the snowstorm, the 12-hour lock-in was later called a "snow-in" because of the all night winter storm. Fortunately for those attending, travel was not a problem as they lived in the neighborhood.

The lock-in was offered as a reward to the children who regularly attend the Dover Housing Authority-Dover Police Department after-school homework lab. Funded by the nonprofit Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, the homework lab is a voluntary after-school program where neighborhood children can get help with their homework from DHA staff and Dover police officers.

The students attending the all-night event were treated to organized games, movies and a DHA-DPD Olympics contest, that not only challenged their physical skill but also their math and spelling skills. Food and an all-night treasure hunt here were also offered.

"I liked the lock-in," said Isaiah Elliott, 10. "I especially liked the pie eating contest because I won."

"I especially liked the pinata," said Rosanna Wheat, 8. Reanna Wheat, Rosanna's twin sister, added that she liked the crab soccer and dress-up contest and both girls said they wanted to do it again next year.

Courtesy Photo

Justin Lincourt takes part in the dress-up relay during the Dover Police Department Dover Housing Authority all-night lock-in at the Seymour Osman Community Center. The dress-up relay was part of the "Fun Olympics" event held during the night.

"It was a great time for the kids," said Officer Stephen Meserve, one of two Dover officers who spent the night supervising the students in the center. "We kept the kids busy with drug-free activities and it gave them a chance to have fun with the DHA staff and police."

The night, however, was not all fun and games. A more serious side included an hour long Youth Crime Watch program where Officer Meserve and Officer Mark Leno spoke about the dangers of drugs and the importance of getting involved in neighborhood safety. As part of the lecture a pair of glasses that blur vision to show alcohol impairment were used.

"It was one of the most surprising parts of the event," said Lisa Stacy, a youth development counselor at the center. "When the police officers gave their crime and substance abuse presentations you could have heard a pin drop, and the drunk' glasses gave the kids a true perspective to how alcohol can affect your actions."

Parents occasionally dropped in to see what was taking place and the age range of the participants, from 6 to 15-years-old, was not a problem. DHA Family Services coordinator Melissa Silvey saw the interaction of parents, children and teens as a plus for the evening.

"It was nice to see the parent involvement and the older kids were setting good examples for the younger ones who were at the lock-in," said Silvey.

As the lock-in came to an end, several sleepy attendees headed home. "I know these kids will be crawling into bed and will probably have to be waken up," said Joyce Conley, Youth Services coordinator.

For one chaperone, however, the day had just begun. "The stormy weather added to the lock-in atmosphere and was festive," said Kris Longenberger. "But now I have to go home and shovel the snow before I can go to sleep."