

Education

They get around

*Hooping workshop educates and delights
Smith School students*

by Tracey Weiss

Using a hula hoop, according to Anhly Huymh, 10, is both fun and hard work.

"It works your arm and your muscles," she said. "It's fun because you can do many things with it."

Like her classmates at Smith School, she took part in a workshop led by Betty "Hoops" Shurin, a nationally known trainer and teacher of hoop dance.

Smith School's two-day workshop, which included a family/community hoop night, was funded by the Foundation for West Hartford Public Schools. Since 1997, the foundation has provided almost \$1 million in grants to enrich the curriculum in the town's schools.

Physical education teacher Kathy Miller wrote the grant "to match our school theme."

Smith is a magnet school in science, math, and technology. In addition to exercise, teachers created lessons related to the hoops on the science and spin of them.

"We're always looking for something exciting," Ms. Miller said. "We've been working towards this workshop all year."

The grant also provided the school with Betty Hoop's 30 custom-made "weighted" hoops. According to her, they are better to exercise with than the standard lightweight hoops found at toy stores.

Past grants have included a circus theme, Frisbees (with a visit from a national Frisbee champion) and even Yo-Yos.

"We're always looking for something for the kids to take home with them as a life skill," Ms. Miller said. "They leave here with self-esteem and it's something they can do in the backyard."

Since they started learning how to use the hoops, she added "87 percent of the kids can hoop around their core. If they could, the kids could do it all day."

Plus "it's like riding a bike. You never forget how."

It's fun and educational, but it's also great exercise.

"You can burn 600 calories an hour. It's great for muscles and great for cardio," Ms. Miller said.

"It works," said student Khoa Dang, 9, as he

West Hartford

APR 11

Vol 13

Issue 12

*Betty Shurin empowers
eight-year-old Brandon
Diaz during his
physical education class.*

Photos by Lisa Brisson

hooped with several of the multi-colored instruments around his waist.

It also worked for foundation board member Sherry Feinglass, who took to hooping right away, moving alongside students in the workshop. She later purchased one of Ms. Shurin's trademark collapsible hoops to use at home.

Ms. Shurin, a four-time Guinness book record holder and creator of the Dance Hoop & 4 Rhythm Workout, among other practices, appreciates the opportunity to spend two days working with students, teachers and family members.

Her program, which she calls Kids Hoop Warriors, uses the elements of earth, air, fire and water to empower children to build on their self-esteem and get exercise.

"It's very playful," Ms. Shurin said, watch-



ing the Smith students move and hoop, "and it helps them support one another." **WHL**

Contact Betty Shurin at www.bettyhoops.com.



Anhly Huymh, 10, gets into the Hula Hoop groove.