

## Olympians receive royal welcome at DES



Youngsters wave cards showing Favor Hamilton and FitzRandolph as they wait excitedly for the two Olympians to arrive.

by Jean Berns Jones

Deafening chants of "U.S.A." joined with brassy Olympic fanfare to surround Suzy Favor Hamilton and Casey FitzRandolph as they ran into the gym at Dodgeville Elementary School April 20th.

Approximately 700 students and others from the Ridgeway and Dodgeville Elementary Schools raised a rousing welcome for the two Wisconsin Olympians, who were in Dodgeville to promote the state's Movin' and Munchin' program.

"This is really the most enthusiastic school we've ever been to," said Favor Hamilton, delighted with the response.

The Movin' and Munchin' nutrition and fitness program is adminis-

tered through the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and sponsored by the WEA Trust, a not-for-profit group health insurer for public school employees.

It encourages students, their families and school employees to eat healthy foods and have regular physical activity through the program offered in their local schools.

"It's very important for our bodies and minds to eat healthy foods and to get out and start moving," Favor Hamilton told the students.

"It's healthy to do activity and not be in front of the TV playing video games all the time. Achieving your goals comes from hard work, determination, and being smart about what you eat," she added.

She and FitzRandolph perceive eating right and regular physical activity to be as important to students' well-being as mastering the three R's. As honorary chairpersons of the program, they travel to schools around the state educating young people and inspiring them to lead healthier lives.

"The primary focus of Movin' and Munchin' Schools is combating childhood obesity and possible diabetes in the future," FitzRandolph explained. "But when Suzy and I travel to schools we also remind

employees that the program is for them, too. In some ways, it's even more important for adults."

"We've been very gratified to learn that we've motivated adults, as well," he added. "That's why school staff are strongly encouraged to participate in the program."

Along with the approximately 40,000 Wisconsin children who are involved, there are also about 15,000 parents and teachers. To date, 170 Wisconsin school districts take part in the Movin' and Munchin' program, and schools may receive up to \$1,000 in awards.

The Dodgeville School District was chosen for the event because Ridgeway Elementary School recently participated and received a \$500 award from the DPI and WEA Trust.

Praising the students, FitzRandolph and Favor Hamilton pointed to the back wall of the gym which is decorated with banners from the Dodgeville District's participation in "Jump Rope for Heart." They applauded the students for having raised over \$10,000 through this annual event, which benefits the American Heart Association.

They also praised the kids for practicing "No TV Week," which was currently being observed in Dodgeville schools. Both Olympians volunteered to join in the students' effort by not watching television that week themselves.

After hearing remarks from School District Superintendent Diane Messer and others, the audience watched two brief highlight films featuring the lives and accomplishments of the Olympians. Both are among the fastest people in the world in their respective areas.

FitzRandolph grew up in Verona, where he started speed skating at the age of four. From the start, his skill was amazing and he consistently out-raced his peers, moving higher and higher in competition.

He is a three-time Olympic competitor in speed skating and won the Gold Medal at Salt Lake City in 2002. He holds the Olympic record for fastest 500 m. in long-track speed skating. Now he lives in Madison with his wife and two children.

Favor Hamilton was raised in Stevens Point and is a UW-Madison

alumnus. She discovered she was a fast runner during a track meet in fifth grade, when she was far ahead of all the other girls -- and also the boys.

She is a three-time Olympic contender who holds nine NCAA titles. She is the winner of seven national championships, and is a four-time Big Ten Female Athlete of the Year. Still one of the fastest women in the world, she lives in Madison with her husband and daughter.

After the videos, she and

FitzRandolph quickly turned the focus away from themselves and toward a future healthy lifestyle for everyone in the room. Running into the audience, Favor Hamilton selected a girl and "ran with her like a horse" down the aisle.

Next she asked four volunteers to run in place, and then gauged whether their smiles were bigger before or after the exercise. In another game, teams of students ran relays to information boards and selected healthy types of foods and

exercise, while the rest cheered.

"I encourage kids and adults alike to find an exercise they can enjoy together and get moving," Favor Hamilton said.

"Suzy and I are huge believers in living a healthy, active lifestyle," FitzRandolph said. "Movin' and Munchin' is not about winning gold medals but about being healthy throughout your life. The time to set those standards is at a very young age -- with school kids."

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### Olympians from front



Dodgeville and Ridgeway students give Olympians Casey FitzRandolph and Suzy Favor Hamilton an enthusiastic welcome in the Dodgeville Elementary School gym last week.

### Area Deaths

Margaret A. Hickok, 64,  
Mineral Point  
Elizabeth L. Ruppert, 83,  
Lone Rock



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