

Ivy Wilson

Ventriloquist teaches students Chill Skills



By Ivy Wilson

On November 17th, students at Tisdale Elementary School learned some very valuable lessons that they can use in the playground when ventriloquist Val Hilliker came to visit. Hilliker uses a variety of puppets to teach what she calls the ‘chill skills’ to help kids cope when they are in situations when bullying occurs.

“I have a list of strategies that the puppets teach, how to be peacefully assertive enough for themselves so that they can stand for themselves when people are being cruel,” Hilliker noted. “I think the bullying word is a bit overused and I don’t usually use it because teachers know what it is, but kids don’t usually have a clear definition. So I teach kids how to stand

up for themselves when their feelings get hurt and how to protect themselves from that.”

The first skill is to ‘chill’, meaning to take the time to stop and breathe deeply to think things through. The second is ‘help’, meaning that if they are feeling scared or threatened to get help. The third skill is to ‘ignore’ the negative behavior in a detached way. The fourth skill is to ‘look up’, be assertive and use eye contact and without getting mad, say “stop that I deserve respect”. Finally, the last skill is the ‘leave’ by simply walking away from a bad situation.

“I am with the virtues project, so I teach about courtesy and kindness and courage, helpfulness, joyfulness, assertiveness, all of those good virtues.

We focus on the positive to eliminate the negative, you’re not going to see puppets ripping their heads off and then we solve the fight, because kids already know how to do the fighting,” Hilliker explained. “Kids are going to push buttons wherever they can push buttons, it is the weakest link kind of thing. They just need to learn how to stand up for themselves and I show them what that looks like through puppets.”

Hilliker is based out of Calgary traveling to shows with 22 puppets. She has done shows all across Canada, in the United States and even Japan. Earlier in the day, she also visited the Star Colony School where she taught the ‘Chill Skills’ to those students as well.