

Feature Writing

2011 KSPA Regional Competition

Description

You are a member of Ad Astra High School's newspaper staff. Your editor has assigned you to write a feature story using the information provided.

School Info

Name: Ad Astra High School
Location: Aspera, Kansas
Mascot: Box Turtles
Enrollment: 850 (grades 9-12)
School Colors: Green & Gold
Yearbook: The Honeybee
Newspaper: The Star

Contest Info

This is an **on-site** contest.

Please attach **your assigned contest number** in the upper right-hand corner of your entry.

Do not put your name on the entry. If you do, your entry will be disqualified.

Students are not to request help or advice from anyone other than the KSPA Executive Director. All work must be that of the contestant.

Assignment

You are to write a 300-word story on the school's official parkour club, a group of students who bound around town practicing parkour, which was popular in the early 2000s, then was brought to Ad Astra after a 2009 episode of "The Office."

The writer should determine which information is relevant and important to the story. Students may write in pen or pencil. Students may use dictionary, thesaurus and A.P. style manuals. The use of personal listening devices (i.e. iPods), recording devices, electric typewriters and personal computers during the contest is prohibited.

Background

- Friends Nick Lowe, David Edmunds and Elvis Costello – all students at Ad Astra High School – were watching the season 6 premiere of "The Office" in late September 2009. The show opened with characters Michael Scott, Dwight Schrute and Andy Bernard jumping and somersaulting around the office. Character Jim Halpert explained what they were doing as "Parkour." The scene ended with Bernard leaping from a wall into a cardboard box. He appeared to be injured, but still yelled "Parkour!" to Schrute and Scott.
- After watching that opening scene, Lowe, Edmunds and Costello started using the Internet search engine Google to find out more about Parkour. Here's some of what they found.
- From Americanparkour.com:
 - In a nutshell, parkour is the art of movement in which one overcomes the obstacles in his/her surroundings in the most quick, efficient and flowing way. It encompasses running, jumping, vaulting and climbing to overcome those obstacles. Parkour can be performed without special equipment, in any environment, both natural and man-made. It requires one to develop and utilize strength, balance, agility and fluidity, and apply them with prudence, awareness, control, and cool-headedness.
 - The word "Parkour" is a modification of the French phrase "parcours du combattant," roughly translated as "military obstacle course." At first glance parkour looks like an extreme sport, and it certainly has many of the same qualities of an extreme sport. However, it is considered by many practitioners (known as "traceurs") as more of an art and discipline. It has creative and aesthetic elements that allow for individual expression, and also promotes inner strength and personal growth.

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- From Americanparkour.com:
 - It introduces us to complete freedom from restraining obstacles, and it is this freedom amidst the routine and regimentation of much of modern society that makes parkour very appealing. It is a method that's available to us at any time to deal with the obstructions facing us, both mental and physical. No obstacle, no barrier, no restraint can stop the traceur; they continue moving forward in spite of, and in harmony with these.
 - While parkour does allow for a great deal of originality, there is a certain methodology commonly used when practicing it. The traceur chooses his/her own path through the environment adapting to and using anything in this path to create unique and flowing movement. When many techniques or moves used to overcome obstacles are linked together in an efficient and continuous way, it is known as a "run." If you see someone that looks like they're running from the police, but there is no one in pursuit, it's probably parkour.
- The three friends were hooked and decided it would be fun if AAHS started an official Parkour and Free Running Club. Thus, the AAPFR Club at Ad Astra was born in January 2010. It was an unofficial club for nearly a year, becoming official in January 2011.
- The boys began going to the Aspera Mall and leaping over fountains, small children and other obstacles there. They flung themselves from low-hanging bars as well.
- Once, at a store called The Finish Line, the boys tried to move over, under and through the store's racks and shelves of clothes. Unfortunately, Costello caught his toe on a display of Fort Hays State University merchandise. The display tumbled to the ground, tossing all the sweatshirts, t-shirts and hats with it. Costello sprained his ankle. He lay on the ground while Edmunds and Lowe ran to Edmund's car in the parking lot. Costello was found by store employees and mall security. He apologized. The store wanted him to pay for the broken stand and a couple of sweatshirts that were dirtied by his shoe. Costello didn't have the money. He now volunteers at the store part-time to make up for what he did. The rest of the group doesn't do parkour or free-running in the mall anymore. This happened
- The boys put up posters in the school's halls. They hoped to find other students interested in joining, and they hoped to find at least one faculty member. The faculty member could serve as a sponsor, and he/she could help the students write by-laws and do all the other administrative tasks required for them to receive funds through the school's activities funds.
- The first student to respond was Diana Krall. Diana Krall had been on the AAHS girls gymnastics team. However, the school cut the gymnastics team in 2009 because the district decided to cut all sports teams with fewer than 15 students involved. That year, the AAHS gymnastics team had only 13 students. Six boys were on the boys teams. Seven girls were on the girls team. The district made its decision to save money.
- Krall soon impressed the boys with her parkour and free-running skills. The boys hadn't ever played sports (except video games and Wii Tiger Woods golf), and Krall soon became the best in the group. When they wrote by-laws and chose officers, Krall was voted in as the group's first president.
- The AAPFR Club began with those four members and two seniors who graduated in 2010. This fall, the group added six more members. They practiced their moves
- The group got approval in January 2011 when it submitted the proper application to the Vice Principal for Activities at AAHS. The application included complete by-laws and a faculty sponsor profile.
- The faculty sponsor is Ryan Adams, a 22-year-old science teacher who just graduated from Pittsburg State University. Adams did Parkour at PSU and in high school in Neodesha.
- The club's ultimate goal is to raise enough money to build an obstacle course in an open field next to AAHS. They already have permission from the landowner to do so.

...Continued on page 3

Quotes

- Sophomore Nick Lowe: "It's just a way to test myself. The end goal of my training is to become as strong as I can in every way possible."
- Senior David Edmunds, vice president of the AAHS Parkour Club: "It's a sense of self-awareness that 'yeah, it doesn't matter what the obstacle is, you can overcome it."
- Junior Diana Krall, president of the AAHS Parkour Club: "I think a lot of people want instant gratification. Parkour is a very long process that you have to be dedicated to."
- Edmunds: "Diana is the most awesome traceur I've ever seen. You can't put anything in her way. She'll get over it, under it, through it . . . she'll do whatever it takes."
- Senior Elvis Costello: ""You practice overcoming physical obstacles. Internally and mentally that mirrors exactly overcoming obstacles in life. For a lot of people, it lends them a sense of self-worth because it espouses values of hard work, humility and altruism. They look at it as a life lesson."
- Costello: "Yeah, that rack at the mall. Well, I'm still paying for that, aren't I? It was a great lesson to learn: Don't screw around in the mall, man."
- Ryan Adams, faculty sponsor for the AAPFR Club: "There's a sense of personal awareness of your body and what you can do. You're a stronger person . . . mentally. The internal developments are a huge reward."