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This professor clowns around in class

LCC grad travels country with his off-beat lessons

BY ERIN FROST
THE COURIER

Professor Steve's class was in session Thursday.

And when Professor Steve isn't in class, he's masquerading as Waldo the Clown.

Steve Walden, a 1981 graduate of Lincoln Christian College, travels the U.S. to teach science as one of his two alter egos: Professor Steve or Waldo the Clown.

It's his full-time job, and he's good at it.

"We're not doing any of that fancy-schmancy science stuff today," he told the students of Washington-Monroe School as they gathered in the gym Thursday morning. "Are you ready to have fun?"

The chorus of "Yeahs" was deafening.

Walden, who now lives in Lebanon, Ind., grew up in Decatur and graduated from Warrensburg-Latham High School. He started his teaching programs in 1982. By 1989, they were his full-time job.

"I travel the entire United States doing science programs, getting the kids excited about science using illustrative things that I know will get the attention of both the kids and the adults," he said.

"Anything that fizzes or pops or smells or anything like that is something that people will remember, and then you can go ahead and have fun with it and at the same time get the teaching across."

During his Thursday morning presentation, he demonstrated how a parachute works and explained why a balloon makes a funny noise when it deflates slowly or a pop when "Mr. Pin" comes into the picture.

Walden also incorporates things into his programs that keep adults entertained.

"They're not programs just for kids or for adults," he said. "The programs are written and meant to be for all ages. There were some things the teachers got that went right over the heads of the kids."

For example, he told the audience that Mr. Pin was Asian and kept right on talking without hesitation as the kids continued to watch with rapt attention and adults chuckled.

Some of the kids recognized Professor Steve.

Walden has performed at the summer program at Lincoln Christian Church for the past three years and also has been involved with Jefferson Street Church. At churches, he incorporates a gospel lesson.

He said he'll work with "Anybody that wants a high-content program that is fun."

"The whole purpose of doing this is to let the kids know that science is fun," he said.

"I've got about eight Professor Steve programs," he said. "They're 45-minute programs that I can do at a moment's notice. I usually write one or two a year to add to those."

Thursday morning's presentation was the "Amazing Air Show." He did the "Crazy Kitchen Laboratory Show" in the afternoon, and parents brought kids back to the school for an evening "Outta Sight Light Show" involving lasers.

"The programs that I do, whether it be Professor Steve or Waldo, from the beginning they're not written to be kids' programs," Walden said. "They're not written to be adults' programs; they're written for everybody."

People can find out more about Professor Steve and Waldo the Clown at www.professorstevesamazingscience.com.



Professor Steve — otherwise known as Steve Walden — entertains and teaches students at Washington-Monroe Elementary School Thursday morning. Walden travels the U.S. doing science programs as Professor Steve and clowning programs as Waldo the Clown. Walden graduated from Lincoln Christian College in 1981.