

## SCHOOL NEWS

# Legendary runner Rod Dixon visits Valley Central

By LAURA FITZGERALD  
lfitz@tcnewspapers.com

Rod Dixon, an Olympic medalist and 1983 New York City marathon winner, stood before a group of Valley Central middle and high schoolers on a drizzly Monday afternoon.

“Ok now spin around,” he said.

The students took off for a goal at the end of the field, spinning around each step of the way until they turned around and returned to the starting line, wobbling from dizziness.

“I forgot to tell them three steps in between,” Dixon said, chuckling.

Originally from New Zealand, Dixon travels around the world inspiring young people to lead healthy lifestyles and reach their full potential. Dixon is the founder and CEO of KIDSMARATHON, a non-profit organization that encourages kids to make healthy lifestyle choices and provides a program in which kids run a full marathon over eight to 10 weeks.

The modified cross-country team raised more than \$500 for Dixon’s foundation by hosting a triathlon.

When Dixon was in New York for the New York City marathon last weekend, long-time friends and Walden residents Brian and Carolyn Baker asked if Dixon could stop by the school. Dixon gladly accepted.

Dixon started his visit with a motivational pep talk explaining to the students who he was and why he travels to schools around the world. His first inspiration was Edmund Hillary, one of the first two men to summit Mount Everest.

Hillary visited Dixon’s classroom when he was in grade school, inspiring him to follow his passion for running.

“He came to my school to tell us kids that Mount Everest wasn’t high enough for your goals, your dreams and your aspirations,” Dixon said. “We thought that was pretty cool.”

After Dixon won bronze in the 1972 Olympics, he traveled to Hillary’s house to show him the medal.

“I brought out this medal,” Dixon said, holding out his bronze medal, “and I let him hold it, and . . . he [Hillary] said: ‘Young Rodney will you promise that you will inspire the next generation?’ And I said I would. He gave me the medal back, the door closed and I thought, ‘What do I do now?’”

After Dixon answered a few questions, he took the students outside for exercise. The students ran backwards, sideways,



PHOTO PROVIDED.

Olympic medalist and 1983 New York City Marathon winner Rod Dixon visits Valley Central to speak to middle and high school runners.

in circles; They kicked balls with one foot and tossed them up in the air while running; they did squats and stood on one leg.

Dixon finished the workout with a lap around the field and a pep talk, students huddling around him in the drizzle.

Dixon explained PRIDE—Personal Responsibility for Daily Effort—a motivational mantra the reminds students to always do their best.

Kids learn by doing, Dixon said. They enjoy being creative and spontaneous, a common theme he sees in children



Rod Dixon leads students in squats.

through his travels.

“Kids are kids, wherever you are in the world,” Dixon said.

A member of the modified cross-country team Ainsley Baker said Dixon taught her how to gain self-confidence.

“You need to be determined and have pride in yourself and believe in yourself,” Baker said.

A member of the varsity cross country team Hannah Moore said Dixon taught her the value of hard work and dedication.

“I learned that anything is possible, and you can achieve your goals if you just

put your mind to it,” Moore said.

The inspiration goes both ways. Dixon said the students he visits inspire him every day, giving him energy and happiness. He remembers the day he told himself he would go to the Olympics and he hopes to inspire others with that same passion.

At the end of the session, as the students filed out, one of the students stopped to talk to Dixon.

“I’m going to the Olympics now,” the student said, smiling.

## Ulster BOCES hosts annual college day

Wallkill Central School District students met with college representatives November 7 at Ulster BOCES Career & Technical Center during the annual College and Armed Forces Day. Fashion Design student Faith Riley from the Highland Central School District spoke with a representative from LIM College and perused additional post-secondary schools. Aviation student Kyle McGrath from the Wallkill Central School District met with a Vaughn College representative.

Eighteen institutions of higher learning and six branches of the United States Armed Forces visited the Career & Technical Center. Students explored their post graduate options, discussed entrance requirements, financial aid, campus life, and academic programs. The students also had access to informational brochures and catalogs that they could review at home.

The visiting schools included Bryant & Stratton College, SUNY at Cobleskill, Columbia-Greene Community College, The Culinary Institute of America, SUNY at Delhi, Dutchess Community College, Lincoln Technical Institute, Maria College, Pennsylvania College of Technology, SUNY at Morrisville, and Universal Technical Institute.

