

Rollicking visit to the hospital

Following the children as they follow around the doctors and nurses

By Monica Lopossay
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Students received training with bandages, which most of them decided to keep on their fake injuries as part of the Bridges program at St. Joseph Medical Center. The Bridges program is a summer continuing-education program at St. Paul's School. (Sun photo by Monica Lopossay / July 8, 2008)

I walked into a dark auditorium with my laptop, a photo slide show ready and butterflies in my belly. I thought, "I'll do OK." After all, I had the laughing horse photo, my secret weapon. Kids love the laughing horse.

I was asked by Rob Paymer, a former *Sun* photography intern who now is director of Bridges, a summer continuing-education program at St. Paul's School, to speak to a crowd of third-, fourth- and fifth-graders.

After the slide show (the laughing horse is now famous at Bridges), he took me on a tour of the campus and the program.

On the tour, aside from being floored by kids reading *The Martian Chronicles* aloud and doing math that looked like hieroglyphics (I was never good at math, so it was probably geometry), Paymer mentioned that the kids go on field trips, lots of them! One involves Bridges students, raw chicken ... sutures?! As a photojournalist, when you hear this, bells and whistles should go off in your head, screaming, "Let me go, let me go, let me go!"

I got to go.

I spent the day at St. Joseph Medical Center with about 20 students. They indeed practiced suturing a raw chicken thigh. The range of expressions on their faces was priceless, and what they learned following doctors and nurses around St Joe's undoubtedly is, too.

I left trying to grasp the long-term effect of what Bridges offers these children. That's when I realized I had the biggest smile on my face, and the best feeling inside.

monica.lopossay@baltsun.com