

ON THE AIR

Kids make waves on radio

Local library, radio station gives tips on life as a DJ

By Monique Brand
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Rose Burrell (left), 12, and Ashley Kniffen, 14, record a public service announcement as part of the Copper Queen Library's Summer Reading Program at the Bisbee Royale. The program spans 8 weeks and has children participating in various activities throughout the city.

Photo by Mark Levy

BISBEE — Mayor David Smith has some explaining to do.

A sixth-grader named Brendan Johnston claimed he was the mayor of Bisbee live on the radio Wednesday afternoon.

“Well, I was mayor for like 10 minutes,” he said. “We had a fake city council meeting and talked about bringing snacks to the pool.”

Johnston’s 15-minutes of fame was heard through the airwaves of KBRP 96.1 FM community radio during a field trip provided by the Copper Queen Library summer reading program. He was joined by 19 other kids for the unique occasion.

The trip started with a tour of KBRP’s home, the Bisbee Royale, which serves as a cultural arts center offering radio, film, music, poetry, plays, and special events. The venue is located on Main Street in Old Bisbee.

Ryan Bruce, KBRP’s executive director, served as the afternoon’s tour guide.

The building was constructed in 1914, according to Bruce, and first occupied by the congregation of the First Baptist Church until 1991 when the church moved to a new facility in the San Jose neighborhood.

Frederick Hurst, who also designed the Copper Queen Library, was the architect of the building. It was remodeled in 2011 by Bisbee Theatre, LLC to turn the Royale into a performing venue.

Part of the tour included taking the children through the theater control room, which overlooks the entire first floor.

“Oh my gosh, this is too cool,” said sixth-grader Jeremiah Sturm.

Bruce then gave a lesson on how the control boards work, with a light and sound presentation. The students were filled with excitement — some were anxious to touch the DMX lighting control board.

“The design of this area is concentrated to have one person control the show, whether it is the lighting or sound,” Bruce said to the group of kids.

Although their tour guide didn’t allow them kids to touch the sound boards, they checked out the spotlight and change its colors. The youngest of the group, six-year-old Miles Last had a try at it.

“That was pretty cool,” he said.

The tour took an exciting turn when Bruce interrupted a live broadcast and had the children introduce themselves to the city of Bisbee.

“My name is Brendan Johnston and I’m the mayor,” one student declared.

Seven-year-old Ylianna Brown was in the booth while her grandmother, Zenia Estrada looked on.

“She and her brother are visiting from North Carolina,” Estrada said. “I’m glad we came today.”

When it was Sturm’s time on the mic, he talked about how much he like the mining town.

“It was pretty cool to be on the radio, I hope to do this all the time,” he said.

KBRP is not only a community radio station but a 501c3 nonprofit organization.

Created in 1997, the station has been broadcasting for 10 years on 96.1 FM and online. It plays blues, jazz, world, folk, country and independent music and is supported by dozens of programmers and volunteers.

“The station also does a Youth Media Project partnered by the school district,” said Alison Williams, the library’s assistant program coordinator.

The trip came to a close when children came up with public service announcements on why they love community radio and the local library.

“I love the radio because it gives you a voice,” said one student. Another student said they love the library because of its “cool trips.”

Williams said the summer reading program is free, and sponsored by Freeport MacMoRan, the Bisbee Foundation and the City of Bisbee Youth Council.

“Our theme this year is building a better world and our focus is to connect the children with nonprofits and government,” she said.

For more information on the program — which ends the week of July 26 — call Williams at 520-432-4232.



Copper Queen Library Summer Reading Program attendees get a bird’s eye view of the Bisbee Royale stage on Wednesday. The children learned about how a non-profit radio station supports the community.

Photo by Mark Levy



Summer Reading Program students write out their public service announcements and eat popsicles.
Photo by Mark Levy