

Students rescue boy who falls through ice

BY CASEY MOFFITT
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Four London Middle School seventh-graders were spending a mid-January afternoon in Wheeling's Husky Park when they suddenly realized someone needed their help.

Brad Johnson, Charles Toton, Michael Vivacqua and Derek Rivard recalled last week how a group of high school students walked by them in the park one Friday afternoon when one in the group decided to walk out onto a frozen detention pond. The boy on the pond fell through and could not get out on his own.

"His friends laughed at him, and we thought it was funny at first," Toton said. "But then, we could tell he was in trouble and his friends didn't want to help."

The four boys decided to take action. At first, they tried to walk out on the ice, but it began to crack under their feet. Instead, they told the boy in the pond, who was standing chest-deep in freezing water, to break the ice around him. The four students began stomping on the ice from the shore, and met the frozen boy in the middle.

"It was freaky," Rivard said. "He couldn't stand up when he got out. He was lying on the ground and his hands were bleeding."

The four students said they never saw the boy before that day, and they have not seen him since. They said they thought he was a high school student, as he seemed to be older and did not attend London.

Eventually, one of the boy's friends returned to Husky Park with some towels and took him home. The four London students suddenly realized their legs were wet up to their knees from helping the other boy and ran back to the school.



Cathryn Montoya/Staff Photographer

London Middle School seventh-graders Derek Rivard (left to right), Brad Johnson, Charles Toton and Michael Vivacqua saved a high school student from the pond behind them when the boy fell through the ice.

Once they got back to school, they encountered a teacher, who instructed them to put their gym clothes on and throw their wet clothes into a dryer at the school.

The four students said they decided to help because they were the only ones around who were able to do it.

"I know if I was stuck there, I'd want help," Vivacqua said.

"We just saw a guy in need and tried to help," Rivard said.

Toton's mother, Janet, said she was

nervous when she first heard from her son about the accident, but she calmed down when she realized he was OK. She said she was proud of her son's quick thinking.

"I'm glad they took some precautions and didn't just go out onto the ice," she said. "I think the attention from this has brought an impact and validated his actions."

London Middle School Assistant Principal Peter Deleske praised the boy's actions in a letter sent home

to parents.

"This is a great story for many reasons," Deleske wrote. "Our boys demonstrated bravery, resourcefulness and resilience. This story is a reminder to parents and educators alike, that our children who can't pick up their rooms, who at times appear distant, defiant, and self-involved, are also capable of great feats of selflessness."

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