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THIRD-GRADERS in Jessica Alyea's class (from left) Nadia Gamble, J'Myiah Brandon and Carter Borst exit the balloon Wednesday morning with crew member Sheelagh Owen's help.

Fans of balloons

Northeast students learn about hot-air craft

BY CAROL ROEHM

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DANVILLE - The student body at Northeast Elementary Magnet School - more than 300 children - had the opportunity Wednesday morning to sit inside the "envelope" of a hot air balloon, which is the fabric part of the balloon that holds the air.

Danville balloon pilot Donna Carlton-Vish and her crew laid out one of her retired hot air balloons, Sunnyside I, on the paved playground area behind Northeast. Normally, the nylon fabric envelope would not be spread out on rough pavement because it could damage it, but Carlton-Vish said her retired balloon already had a hole in it.

The balloon was cold-inflated with a gas-powered fan so the students could walk and sit inside the partially inflated balloon.



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NORTHEAST ELEMENTARY MAGNET SCHOOL third-grade teacher Jessica Alyea joins her students (from left) Matthew Kilgore, Lincoln Cravens, Torrell Miles and Brylea Goodner in folding up the balloon.

"The whole school is going in," said Pat O'Shaughnessy, who co-chairs Balloons Over Vermilion.

"It's one of the perks of being the

host school," Cassie Keister, the event's marketing chair, said.

Jessica Alyea's third-grade class at Northeast is acting as student

More information

Information about Balloons Over Vermilion is available at www.balloonsoververmilion.com and on Facebook.

hosts during the July 14-15 event at Vermilion Regional Airport, but the entire student body was able to enjoy Wednesday morning's activity.

The activity allowed all of Northeast's students to preview what the Balloon School during Balloons Over Vermilion will be like. The Balloon School will be offered on Saturday, July 15, during the balloon fest so that children and their parents can learn about hot air balloons and how they fly.

Balloon School was such a

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popular feature at last year's balloon fest that event organizers have expanded the Balloon School area for this year's event.

While inside the balloon, Carlton-Vish talked to the students about the 1783 origins of hot air balloons and other information and safety tips.

"Don't touch the basket or balloon unless you have a crew member's permission," she told the children. "Don't get in front of a basket that's moving."

Carlton-Vish also said the ideal weather conditions to fly a balloon are when the wind is at least 3 miles an hour but no more than 8 miles an hour.

"We don't ever fly a balloon in a thunderstorm," she said,

adding, "I never know where I'm going to land."

Before wrapping up the Balloon School session, Carlton-Vish asked the youngsters if they would do "something special" for Balloons Over Vermilion.

The children, in unison, said, "See you at Balloons Over Vermilion" while being recorded for a commercial.

The youngsters seemed en-

thusiastic about their up-close encounter with a hot air balloon.

"It's pretty big," third-grader Alli Rogers observed. "It takes a lot of work to blow it up."

Alli apparently took Carlton-Vish's safety tips to heart as well.

"Even if you're a foot off the ground, never get out of the basket," she said.