

## **PIED PIPER PERFORMS**

### **Charismatic Valley sings, dances for McNary Elementary**

By Kathy Aney, The East Oregonian, Hermiston, OR September 21, 2005

Jim Valley danced, sang and conversed with McNary Elementary School students Tuesday in a soothing, yet energetic voice reminiscent of the late Mr. Rogers.

He traveled to Umatilla, one stop on a worldwide itinerary to interact musically with children. Next month, her will fly to Russia to perform at an American International School. He's already visited India, Egypt, South America, Saudi Arabia and Japan, among others.

The charismatic performer, nicknamed the "International Pied Piper" mesmerized his young audience with his Pollyannaish, rainbow-loving view of the world. He sang of frogs, chocolate waterfalls and everything whimsical. The 63-year old Gig Harbor, WA, native moved gracefully in his tie-dyed shirt with matching socks, keeping eye contact with his young audience members.

Valley harnessed the kids' energy by directing them to clap their hands, make sweeping motions, dance and join in on the on the choruses. He started the performance with a lesson on underwater sign language. He extolled the virtues of immersing children in music at a young age.

"If we embrace it when we are young," Valley said, "we become happier, healthier adults."

Since 1980, Valley has endeavored to spark creativity with his Rainbow Planet Workshop. Music, he believes, can shape and inspire children. Music is something that exists inside us all, Valley said. "It can calm us, excite us, wake us up," he said. "It touches our emotions."

Valley used poetry, freshly written by students, to illustrate the process of setting words to music. Kindergartners Melanie Varday, Ann Johnson and Paula Trueax jointly wrote one of the poems. Two first-grade classes collaborated to write the other poem. Valley read the poems out loud. Then transformed them into instant songs, recording them for the classes to play later. "It's a nice way to encourage writing in a different way," said Dianna Veleke, the assistant principal. blending music, movement and creativity.

He's produced six recordings and a musical play called "Wished Come True: Secrets of the Rainbow Planet."