

BLACKSTONE VALLEY

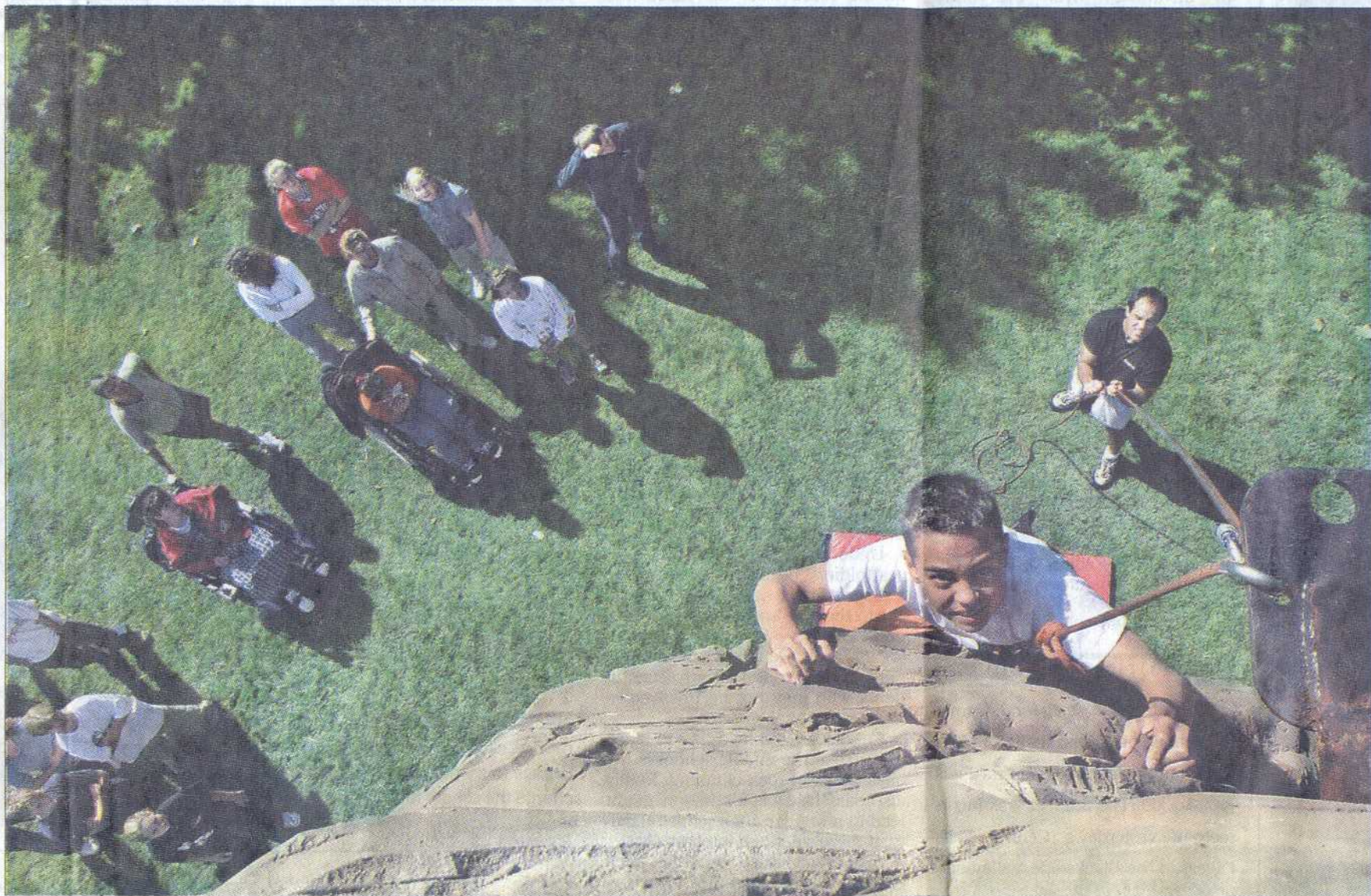
SECTION

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2000

SERVING CENTRAL FALLS, CUMBERLAND, LINCOLN, NORTH SMITHFIELD, PAWTUCKET & WOONSOCKET

The teacher doesn't mind, but ...



Journal photos/KRIS CRAIG

THE NEW P.E.: Eighth grader Alex Belshe scales a mobile climbing wall set up at Lincoln Middle School recently. Debra B. Reddy invited Robert J. Catalozzi, of Narragansett and formerly of Lincoln, to bring the wall so her students could try the sport. Below, Danielle Hall, also in the eighth grade, rappels down the rock face.

Students are climbing the walls

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By M. BRADFORD GRABOWSKI
Journal Staff Writer

LINCOLN — The mountain came to Lincoln Middle School last week.

But it was only 25 feet high, portable, rentable and formed from man-made materials.

The mobile climbing wall was hauled to the school on its side by its owner, Robert J. Catalozzi, a Narragansett resident who grew up in Lincoln. He can take it almost anywhere — weddings, picnics, birthday parties — attracting climbers from a 2-year-old toddler to a 72-year-old woman.

Last week, eighth graders at the middle school attempted to conquer the wall as part of a physical education class.

LINCOLN

"I wanted to expose the kids to an alternative recreational activity," said gym teacher Debra B. Reddy, who helped demonstrate. "Obviously, I can't teach this in gym class and there's no place around here to climb."

From a distance, the structure looked like an Easter Island monolith, and cars passing by the school slowed down to check it out.

CATALOZZI, 29, and his three-person crew arrived with helmets, pulleys and mats, and each student was spotted by a trained crew member.



*"The kids learn to trust each other
and work together effectively"*

ROBERT J. CATALOZZI

Wall

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Students had to sign a liability waiver before they could take part, and it wasn't a mandatory exercise. But the intention, said Catalozzi and Reddy, was for the students to build their confidence and have fun. Reddy estimated that 98 percent of the class participated.

"It was cool," student Kevin Garneau, 13, said. "I'm going to do it again."

Nick Fasano, also 13, said he had a broken ankle, but that didn't stop him from climbing to the top of all four sides without shoes on.

"It's definitely been a self-esteem builder," Reddy said. "A lot of the kids I thought would shimmy up, it

turned out to be more difficult. But, by the time they belayed up, you could see a sense of accomplishment on their face."

"It's an accomplishment," said Catalozzi, who rents out his mountain to corporations and organizations that hire him for picnics and parties at \$1,500 for a full day, \$1,000 for a half-day. He offered his services at the middle school for free, Reddy said

THE MOUNTAIN, which is embedded with spikes for the climbers to grasp, also has ropes on pulleys. Though it weighs about 2,000 pounds, Catalozzi said it takes only 10 minutes to set up or break down.

Underneath layers of Fiberglas is scaffolding, he said. An automatic pulley system helps the climbers get to the top, and makes sure they don't fall.

"It's a different kind of a workout," he said, one that attracts students who may not be involved in more traditional sports.

Catalozzi said he'd like to teach a course at the middle school in the basic skills of rock climbing. Reddy also said last week's lesson might lead to a regular after-school activity, if there's enough interest

"The kids learn to trust each other and work together effectively," Catalozzi said "It's fun"



Journal photo/KRIS CRAIG

HIGHER GOALS: Eighth graders from Lincoln Middle School climb a mobile climbing tower brought to the school recently to give students a chance to try out a new activity. Robert Catalozzi, who owns the wall, didn't charge the school for the visit.

Audit

wood said yesterday that he's not stopping the auditors from begin-

CORRECTION

The number to call for information about programs at the YMCA Community Center of Central Falls is 728-7300. The number was incorrect in yesterday's Central Falls Digest in the Blackstone Valley edition.