

Keene State Today

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FUN & GAMES

Yep, the Beard is Real

Dave Callender '02 has the Christmas spirit all year round, so much so that he recently arrived at Keene State's Alumni Center with jingle bells on, illustrating just how much fun he has as a professional Santa Claus.

A resident of Surry, New Hampshire, Callender was freshly returned from Denver, Colorado, where he attended

prior to growing out his white whiskers. "When I was working at National Grange Mutual Insurance, they asked me to play Santa at the holiday party," he says. "It was a lot of fun, so I kept doing it year after year. It just evolved from there."

Callender, a nontraditional student who majored in computer science at Keene State, typically makes 25 Santa

at the fifth hole. Snow is going all over the place. That gig was really something cool," he says.

Families also invite Callender into their homes. He's been visiting two families in the Keene area for the past five years, becoming a part of their holiday traditions. "I love making people happy and making kids smile," says Callender. "The happiness is my favorite thing about the holiday season."

One of the most surprising things Callender has noticed is that the old adage about getting coal in your stocking doesn't resonate with this new generation. "Kids don't know what coal is, so it doesn't have the same meaning that it used to have," he notes. "Instead, I say, 'If you're not good you'll get socks and underwear.'"

"Santa also never says 'yes.' He always says, 'I'll see what I can do, we'll try,'" he adds. "You don't want to make promises parents can't keep because you don't know the situation at home." Callender goes on to say that he wishes parents would also indicate that the more expensive items come from them rather than from Santa. "When kids return to school and compare their new toys, and some get nicer things, that can cause a problem," he says.

The most important part of being a professional Santa is staying in character. "You don't want to ruin the magic," he says. "Parents come up to me and ask me my name. I always answer Santa Claus, St. Nicholas, Kris Kringle, Père Noël."

While most don't realize there are professional Santas (the New England Santa Society has nearly 100 members), it's hard to picture Dave Callender as anything else. He's donned real leather boots, a red and white outfit, and is carrying a strap of jingle bells. Even his laugh is jolly and joyful. He certainly convinced a wide-eyed little girl he crossed paths with as he left the Alumni Center after his recent visit, asking her, "Are you being good this year?"

— Laurie O'Hara
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Santa Claus, aka Dave Callender '02

the biannual International Brotherhood of Real Bearded Santas – yes, "real bearded" is an important distinction. At this conference, Santas from around the world (one came all the way from Norway) gather to share tips and to learn. There were 40 different Santa-inspired workshops over the two-day event. Callender enjoyed the American Sign Language workshop, where he learned to sign "Merry Christmas."

He's been a real bearded Santa since 2010, though Callender started playing Santa

appearances a season. The most notable is the Keene Tree Lighting, which takes place annually the day after Thanksgiving. "I like the tree lighting because that's the start of my season," he says. "It's just so much fun. I arrive on a fire truck, everyone is cheering, you feel like a rock star."

He certainly felt like a celebrity last December when he arrived in a helicopter at an event in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. "We take off, we fly around the golf club, and then we land

"Are you being good this year?"

More Than Fun and Games

Think back to your physical education classes in elementary school and beyond. If you recall only playing games or doing tedious exercises, you're not alone. However, today's physical education classes are different, more exciting, and about much more than fun and games.

"Enjoyment, or fun, is only part of the five standards of physical education," says Eric Carpenter, assistant professor of human performance and movement sciences. "Fun and games is a stereotype. The goal is to help the whole child learn."

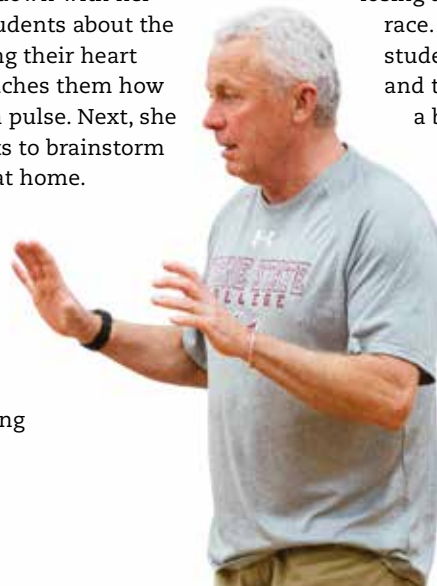
At Keene's Symonds Elementary School you might find PE teacher Michelle Tiani '03 setting up a game called Color

Tag, in which children run to and from colored cones. The game tests the youngsters' ability to move methodically while under a time constraint. After the game, Tiani sits down with her class, talks to students about the benefits of getting their heart rates up, and teaches them how to find their own pulse. Next, she asks her students to brainstorm ways get active at home.

"We teach the whole student; we're not just teaching them to play tag," says Tiani. "It's about creating a well-rounded

student who can take on a challenge in their life, whether it's being the tagger, or answering a question in front of the class, or being able to accept losing a spelling bee or losing a race. Physical education gets students ready to take risks and to push themselves to be a better person."

Games, the aspect typically associated with physical education, are used to apply learned skills, but these skills can also be applied in fitness activities, dance, lifetime activities



Tod Silegy and his middle-schoolers at South Meadow School.



(such as biking or hiking), and sports. Class structure typically centers around learning or reviewing a new skill, practicing it, and then implementing newfound abilities in a rhythmic activity or game.

Tod Silegy '76, a PE teacher at South Meadow School, a middle school in Peterborough, New Hampshire, builds upon learned skills. For example, his students master Pickleball, a paddle sport, and NitroBall, a volleyball spin-off, before moving on to tennis and volleyball. He begins his classes with a short fitness circuit to warm up students before starting team building and problem-solving activities that culminate in learning lifetime

pursuits, from rock-wall climbing to skateboarding to mountain biking.

“Our ultimate goal is to help students be movers for their lifetime,” says Dr. Donna Smyth, professor and chair of Keene State’s Human Performance and Movement Sciences Department. “To lead


“Our ultimate goal is to help students be movers for their lifetime”

a healthy, active lifestyle, you need to be a competent mover. You’re not going to like moving around if you don’t have the knowledge or skills to be proficient and to enjoy movement.”

Physical education classes also provide an opportunity to help students build self-confidence. “The accomplishments they make might be the only success they have all day,” adds Silegy. “My class gives them an opportunity to succeed.”

“By starting physical education with young children, you teach them to value movement from a young age up through high school,” says Smyth. “By the time these students leave high school, they’re proficient, they appreciate movement, and they enjoy it.”

– Laurie O’Hara

 Read more about the physical education program at Keene State at keene.edu/mag.

Keene State students training to be physical education teachers make their way through the woods as part of an orienteering exercise in Professor Donna Smyth’s Outdoor Pursuits class. Photo by Grace Pecci '18

