



Times Photo

## Rudy rocks!

# Rudy the Red Fox tells kids how to remain safe

By Mike Crimmins

Rudy the Red Fox, a nocturnal animal, took time from his sleeping on Friday to teach Whitehall elementary students how to resist abduction.

Rudy and his friend Paul Brower have traveled to schools throughout the state, teaching more than 51,000 kids how to avoid being kidnapped by strangers.

There are mean and tricky criminals that take children, Brower told the Whitehall students. Through song, dance and example, he and Rudy taught the kids three basic rules—check with a parent or authority figure, use the buddy system, and if someone makes you feel uncomfortable, say no and tell someone.

The show began with Brower talking to the assembly, but when Rudy did not show up Brower went searching throughout the school for the six-foot fox. Rudy showed up with the principal and accompanied by corrections officers, but no one knew where Brower was. Rudy pointed out that Brower did not check with anyone before leaving the gym.

The children were told if they are lost in a store to stay in the store and find an employee or security guard. As soon as they leave the store it's all over, Brower said.

The duo promoted a positive attitude toward

school and life.

They ended the show with 12 boys and girls standing in front of the audience and Brower said that in the time the program had lasted, the number of kids standing before them had been abducted.

Before they leave the school, Rudy and Brower take the children's fingerprints and photograph them. If the child turns up missing or abducted, the fingerprints and the booklet containing the photographs can be used to help find the boy or girl. The booklets also have a section for parents to fill out that could help to identify a child.

Only students with permission from their parents or guardians had their photographs taken. The photograph is on a digital camera and is erased after the picture is printed in the booklet.

The show is part of the New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association project S.M.A.R.T., for Safety Means Abduction Registration and Training.

Rudy and Brower have performed the show in every county in the state during the last two years. They will perform on Broadway with the actors of "The Lion King" and other shows for the victims of the Sept. 11 attack.