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FEATURED

Reptile-mania in Charles County

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On July 25, My Reptile Guys brought a 9-foot long Burmese python to the Waldorf West Library for children to touch and learn more.

A group of hissing, shelled and scaled reptiles crawled over to the Waldorf West Library — and local children were more than happy to greet them.

On July 25, approximately 100 children, ages 6-11, gathered at Waldorf West Library where My Reptile Guys brought 12 amazing reptiles from Maryland and vast areas around the world. Children were able to learn about reptiles, their habitats and meet the animals in person during this popular reptile show.

“We want to create a blend of entertainment and education through exposing people to a variety of reptiles,” said Turk Ozerol, My Reptile Guys reptile presenter. “We want to dispel some of the myths about reptiles and provide some information about what people might not have known about them. They are able to foster some interest about these reptiles that will make them take out books about reptiles and own reptiles for themselves one day and take care of them.”

Every year, My Reptile Guys visits libraries with an interactive program that allows children to hold and touch reptiles. During the program Ozerol displayed a bearded dragon from West Australia, red ear slider turtle, Milk snake from Honduras, North African spine tail or Uromastix lizard, baby snapping turtle, a corn snake, a blue tongue skink lizard from Australia, a boa constrictor, a black and white giant Tegu lizard, Big Yellow-Foot tortoise, and the large albino Burmese python who is only 3 years old and 9 feet long.

Kelly Watson, a Waldorf resident, said the entire reptile program was educational, fun and interactive. Her son Jordan Lee, 10, said he was excited to see all of the animals — but his favorite reptile was the tortoise.

“The children get to come out and see animals, be with other kids, and learn about animals, which is always good,” Watson said.

Ozerol said a majority of his audiences are typically fascinated by the colorful snakes he brings, both large and small.

“The python is the biggest of our crew and star of the show,” Ozerol said. “We bring out a huge python and it is more eye-catching. The fact that it is albino, which is not its natural typical color pattern, and because of its size, it’s a big hit with the kids.”

Ozerol said he developed a personal interest in reptiles early on in life. He got his first snake at 8 years old and has always been around cold-blooded reptiles and amphibians.

"I'm partial to the snakes because I feel like they are the underdog usually," Ozerol said. "Many people are scared of them, but snakes are actually scared of people and we should actually respect them and even admire them. They help us out and they serve a role in the nature cycle by preying on undesirable rodents or serving as food for prey such as hawks and eagles."



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Juanita Rodriguez, a Waldorf resident and mother of three children said she enjoyed listening to the way Ozerol talked about each reptile. All of his stories, comments and factual information pertaining to reptiles were geared towards kids and easy understand.

Her son Aden Rodriguez, 5, said he enjoyed touching the snake but his favorite part was seeing the tortoise because he has never seen a tortoise that big.

"My favorite part when was he pulled out the python and the black and white Tegu lizard," said her son, Israel Rodriguez, 7.

"All of the kids were able to understand what he was saying and were able to grasp the information," Rodriguez said. "Zoos are typically too far away and with three kids, I try to take them to as many free events as possible."

This was Ozerol's second time hosting the My Reptile Guys events in Charles County. He said there is always a large turnout in this region and the children like the variety of reptiles being brought before them as well as being able to stay afterwards to pet them.

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