

Snakes featured at party

JOHN URREY
Contributing Writer

Serpents fall fairly low on the list of things associated with birthday parties, unless it's the party of nine-year-old Ben Adams of Magnolia.

Ben's parents, Mindy and Doug Adams, invited Clint Putejovsky to his birthday party Jan. 10. He attended the party with his crate full of snakes.

Putejovsky is a herpetologist. He educated and entertained the young partygoers with hands-on demonstrations including non-venomous snakes. The children sat spellbound, inching ever closer to the reptiles in an attempt to be the first to touch the next one out of the box.

Putejovsky has shared his life with serpents for the past 33 years and has been educating the public about snakes for

20.

"My goal is to educate the common man," he said, pointing out that there are entrenched misconceptions about snakes.

"People believe most snakes are venomous," he said. But that is far from the truth in Texas. Only four of the more than one hundred different kinds of snakes in Texas are venomous, they include the rattle snake, the cotton mouth, the ever-present copperhead and the coral snake.

In his presentations Putejovsky often asks the crowd to name the animal that has killed the most humans. Snakes is not the correct answer. Because they spread disease, rodents have killed more people than any other kind of animal. And Putejovsky likes to point out, "The majority of snakes eat rodents."

Aside from the presentations,

Putejovsky runs a full-time business called Texas Snakes and More. The company specializes in removing snakes from homes and property, as well as educating the public about snakes. The company also identifies snakes in photos sent through e-mail. Putejovsky, who will even design habitats for people wanting to attract certain snakes, said the most common mistake people make about snakes is misidentification.

"I'll receive a call from someone who has a cottonmouth and it turns out to be a hognose," he said.

To counter such mistakes, Putejovsky is currently writing a book that will explain how to identify venomous and non-venomous snakes correctly, in terms the layman can understand. For more information on Clint Putejovsky, or on snakes, visit www.texassnakes.net.



Photo by JOHN URREY

Herpetologist Clint Putejovsky allows nine-year-old Ben Adams a closer look at one of the snakes in his collection.