

Local News

Proving everybody is a somebody

By Bob Owen

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If you ask Kelly Clark, everyone is a somebody. That is the message she is taking to Rotary Clubs and educators around the province.

With five years experience in education, the young teacher saw the need for kids to respect themselves and others. So she began to develop a program to teach them

Now, four and a half years later, she has committed herself to finding out if the program is viable for others. She has taken a year off and is travelling the province showcasing it to others.

Ms. Clark claims the program, which uses a cloth doll, can be used in all elementary grades.

Her experience in a wide range of classes has taught Ms. Clark the power of respect. Without it kids have low self esteem and are subject to bullying. With it they are open to sharing and learning from each other. Early on in her working life she realized that self esteem should be based on a person's personal strengths, not on fads and public opinion.

In her program, a box arrives at the classroom door. Inside is a faceless nobody puppet. It has no interests, no age, no ethnicity, abilities or friends.

It is the job of the class to make nobody into a somebody. They do it by taking turns taking him home and adding to nobody's appearance.

Ms Clark says some of the additions are quite pointed and often full of personal significance for the child.

She speaks of a nobody that came back with an

added tail. Its child was connected to the Humane Society. Another nobody returned to school wearing glasses. Its child was collecting them for World Vision. One showed up with a pen in hand. Its temporary owner was collecting names on a petition for animal rights.

When each child brings back the stuffed nobody a presentation is made, stories are written and pictures drawn. Ms. Clark explains that the projects cover all three strands of literacy - reading, writing and oral communication.

The end result is that kids see how easy it is to help others. They continue to do that and the whole class benefits. They see how it takes all different kinds of people to make a successful community.

Unlike some programs geared for classes, this one can be used by kids at a wide range of abilities within one classroom. For some, it is their first time as leaders in their peer group. It becomes a powerful domino effect as kids are empowered to act upon their convictions and help others achieve personal goals.

This year 700 kids are participating in the Who is Nobody? program which takes five minutes of class time a week. And, while she may not be changing the world, Ms. Clark feels that every little bit helps.

The kit costs \$365 and most of it is reusable. Ms. Clark workshops the program for teachers who are planning to use it.

Colborne Rotary President, Betty Brisco, said after the presentation by Ms. Clark, that the local club is interested in the program and hopes to be involved with a couple of local schools in the project

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