

Nobody teaches BES students they're all Somebody

CAROL PICARD BANFF

Nobody came to visit Bronwyn Richards' Grade 5 class in February, unannounced, unexpected and very, very naked.

Nobody stuck around, too, and soon the kids were taking Nobody home. They were writing stories about Nobody, and doing some pretty cool stuff in the community, all for Nobody.

But now with the school year over, not everyone got to spend time with Nobody – although with luck Nobody will be back next year, with a few more Nobodies.

Nobody is actually a stuffed denim doll, the focus of an innovative Canadian education program that was piloted in western Canada this spring at Banff Elementary School.

The ultimate goal of the program is to teach kids about community engagement, respect for themselves and others, and responsibility, with the overarching message that Everybody is Somebody (that the world needs).

Richards, who had a class of 28 10- and 11-year-olds, jumped at the chance to adopt Nobody when staff were asked who wanted to introduce the project to the school. The offer came out of the blue when Ontario teacher Kelly Clark, in Banff on vacation, dropped by the school with a Nobody kit and asked if BES would pilot the project for her out west.

"It's a really fun activity, and something tangible that engages the kids. They get to see the evidence of their contributions, and everyone talks about it," said Richards.

"Unfortunately this year we were one of



Banff Elementary School teacher Bronwyn Richards, left, and her class of Grade 5 students show off Nobody, who's sporting the evidence of the students' good deeds.

CRABIE DOUCE PHOTO

those 'pinch point' classes in the system and with 28 kids, not everyone got a chance to take Nobody home."

Nobody is part of an award-winning educational tool developed in Ontario by Clark, who is now director of the project. It's been launched in more than 250 schools in Eastern Canada and the U.S. While in Banff it's at the Grade 5 level, it can be used from Grades 1 to 12.

The philosophy is dead simple. Each time a student does something for someone else, be it within the class, family, community or even

They got to put some clothes on Nobody. Tia Patschuk, who volunteers to help with the horses at Warner's Stables, got to add a small horseshoe necklace.

Another student walks her neighbour's small dog every day, so she contributed a little purse with a tiny white fluffy dog in it.

Oliver Martin found a stray dog and created a poster that eventually tracked down the dog's owner. Oliver added a pooper-scooper bag to Nobody's ensemble.

Adriana Lozeman added a pencil, representing the young girl in Columbia she helps her family sponsor, with the funds going to the girl's education.

Kyle Mills contributed a screw for Nobody to hold, representing the day he spent helping his Mom put together a computer desk while his Dad was out of town.

Each time a student adds something to Nobody, they write a story and contribute drawings and photos to a class scrapbook about Nobody's life in the class.

"Nobody is starting to become Somebody," Richards said.

"Nobody's goal is to teach them that they can learn something positive from everybody, and everybody can help Nobody become Somebody.

"I think it's made them a little more aware of how they can impact other lives, at school, at home, in the community. Other students are starting to look even further, helping people in other countries."

For more information about the Nobody project, visit www.whoisnobody.com.

www.whoisnobody.com

email: info@whoisnobody.com

phone: (416) 333 7774