

What a doll of an idea

Who is NOBODY program builds character at Whitby schools

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BY LESLEY BOVIE

WHITBY -- School kids are learning a lot about themselves from a denim doll with an identity crisis.

The Who is NOBODY program is a pilot project now underway in a total of six classes in three different Whitby schools thanks to a donation from local Rotary clubs.

It begins with a mysterious box delivered by the school principal. Marked, "To everybody from Nobody," the box contains Nobody, a faceless denim doll.

For the rest of the school year, students must help Nobody, a doll without any character, become somebody by using their interests and abilities to help others.

Students take turns taking Nobody home for a week, adding something to the doll that represents their good deed.

The doll is then brought back and presented to the class. Students also write a story and draw a picture that is added to a class scrapbook.

Jennifer Longpre's Grade 5 and 6 class at Leslie McFarlane Public School began the program by collecting old ink jet cartridges and cellphones that no longer work.

They were sent to thINK FOOD, which hands them into a refurbishing company in exchange for money for a food bank in Whitby. The thINK FOOD logo was Nobody's first adornment.

Since then, Nobody has undergone quite a transformation. It now wears a chef hat, sewn on by Aitana Sebu to represent her bake sale, which raised \$75 for Sick Kids Hospital.

It carries a book for the book drive Cameron Geller held to benefit First Nations. A red felt 'X' has been placed over its mouth and a mitten on its hand to symbolize the sign language classes Ashlee Zommers has held every week for Grade 4, 5 and 6 students to raise awareness for people who don't speak.

Nobody also wears Haidyn Picco's attachment. She placed a collection jar at her family's restaurant to raise money for a neighbour being treated for leukemia at Sick Kids Hospital.

"It's amazing what these kids are coming up with," said Ms. Longpre. "I have a lot of students who volunteer at school and seeing them extend it beyond to the community, is amazing.

"The projects are just so vast in what they can do."

The Who is NOBODY program was developed by former Toronto teacher Kelly Clark and piloted for six years before its formal launch last September.

It is currently being used in 10 school boards with about 25 different rotary clubs donating the \$560.20 kit to students.

Ms. Clark says the kit can be used over and over by classes of any socio-economic background. It taps into the strengths of each individual child rather than trying to fit them all into the same mould.

Other classes in Whitby currently working on their own Nobody dolls include Lynn Valin's Grade 1 class and Carrie-Lynn Keys' Grade 1 and 2 class at R.A. Sennett Public School; Aimee Ward and Cheryl Singer Coulson's Grade 2 classes at West Lynde Public School; and John Patte's Grade 4 class at Leslie McFarlane P.S.



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