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## NEWS LOCAL

# Nobody doll helps kids find their Somebods 2

By Cheryl Clock, The Standard  
Monday, November 11, 2013 11:26:53 EST PM

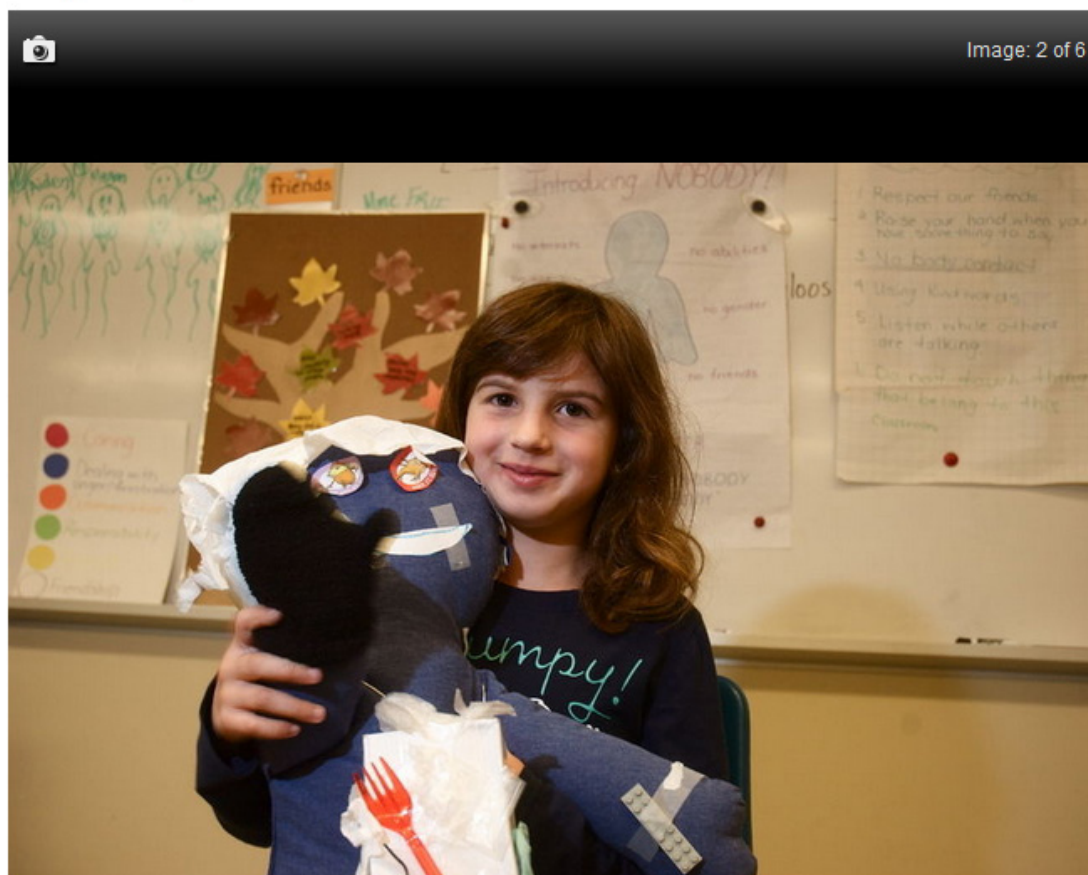


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Madelyn Lapensee, 7, of St. Catharines is a participant in the BEST program through the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara. She is part of the Who is Nobody, a literacy based character building program that encourages kids to take home the Nobody doll and do a good turn for the community. Madelyn is organizing a winter clothing collection at her school. She is pictured presenting her good turn to her BEST friends. St. Catharines, Ont. on Monday, Nov. 4, 2013. Cheryl Clock/St. Catharines Standard/QMI Agency

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Sometimes, there's no need for words.

Especially when you're seven years old, trying to explain how helping other people makes you feel. "Well," begins Madelyn Lapensee from St. Catharines, promptly placing a pointer finger on each side of her mouth and pushing upwards into a giant grin. She holds it in place for full impact.

"Here's an easy peezy question: How did it make me? HAPPY," says Madelyn.

"It just makes me smile a lot."

Madelyn has ADHD. She is a Grade 2 student at Applewood Public School and struggles with making and keeping friends. Every Wednesday night, she spends an hour and a half at the B.E.S.T. — Better Emotional and Social Times — program, run by the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara.

It's a huge confidence boost, says her mom, Julie Lapensee.

Through play and activities, she gets to work with other kids who support each other as they learn coping and social skills.

Part of that involves a blue cloth doll called Nobody.

Who is Nobody? is a literacy-based character building project that encourages kids to do a good deed for their community and then report back with details about what they did. Nobody is eventually turned into a Somebody when each child dresses it with something that represents their positive action.

It's all about building self-confidence, cultivating a sense of responsibility and helping kids realize they can play an important role in society, says Sarah Farrell, program co-ordinator.

While a learning disability can affect a child's ability to read, it can also affect them socially. The program helps them with issues of organization, managing impulsive behaviours, sharing, developing problem-solving strategies and learning to advocate for themselves.

So, on this night, it's Madelyn's turn to report on her project.

She begins by showing the class a video she made with her school friend, seven-year-old Ava Farewell. They pretend act an advertisement for a winter clothing drive that Madelyn started at her school.

"People out there are cold, freezing," she says.

With just a little help, she called Community Care and explained her idea of collecting warm clothes for the needy. Two big bins arrived recently at her school.

Madelyn used money she was given to make the first donation. "I bought beautiful red boots," she says. "And a hat."

She spent the week calling friends and family to make sure they dropped items off too.

"This thing is going to go big so I think we'll need three bins," says Madelyn.

She gave the Nobody doll a black mitten to represent her efforts.

Meanwhile, 10-year-old Sydney Battel from St. Catharines decorated the Nobody doll with a hard hat she made from toilet paper and tape.

Her project involved helping her father renovate a relative's basement.

And eight-year-old Cole Bujan from Port Colborne organized a neighbourhood cleanup with his buddies. They collected three garbage bags of trash. He made a necklace of garbage for Nobody, complete with red plastic fork and twist tie.

The importance is obvious: "Our earth won't be stinky and make all the animals be alive and not eating garbage," says Cole.

"It will make the earth healthy and not dirty. It will make it all clean."

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LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF NIAGARA:

For more information about the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara visit

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#### LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF NIAGARA:

For more information about the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara visit [www.ldaniagara.org/](http://www.ldaniagara.org/)

A formal diagnosis is not required to participate in the programs.

#### WHO IS NOBODY?

The program runs again Feb. 12 to April 16, 2014 at Briardale Public School (6-7:30 p.m.) and Port Weller Public School (3:20-4:50 p.m.). Cost is a \$50 annual family membership to the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara. Registration begins Dec. 1. Visit [www.ldaniagara.org/](http://www.ldaniagara.org/)

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## 2 comments



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**Banjo** · a day ago

What a wonderful cause. People like Madelyn are a true inspiration to the community. We need more people like her.

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**Susan333** · a day ago

This is all good stuff. However, as I am reading it, I am distracted by all the background advertisements. I have no problem with reading, although sometimes with concentration. There have been times when I click on a story or a site and I am bombarded with all the flashing and blinking designed to get our attention...and guess what, it does.

There are times when I'm already on overload so I'll come out of that screen and move on to something else because it rattles me. I think that children and adults with learning disabilities and ADHD have a tough enough time trying to make sense out of plain text without having to block out all the distracting colours and flashing.

I just want to give a thumb's up to the Nobody Doll, and I hope that someday they will realize just how detrimental all this visual background yelling is to those who are struggling with learning disabilities. I just found it a bit ironic that we have this good story geared to the very people who may not be able to focus and read it properly because of all the bling in the background.

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