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Rotarians help young people become better students

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Stirling - To students of Stirling Senior School, seeing a Rotary Club member around the halls has become a familiar occurrence over the past few years.

Every Wednesday, four members of the Stirling club volunteer their time to help students with school work in the library.

"They've started to become a part of the school, a part of the staff," school principal Sharon Kennedy said.

Four years ago, Kennedy met with Rotarian Darcy McGroarty to discuss a program that would benefit the students but at little cost to both the school and the service club. "We're helping the community in a non-financial way," McGroarty said. "We wanted to do something that would be beneficial but also be very cost-effective."

For students who've missed a test, need to catch up on assignments, or just enjoy a one-on-one learning experience, the Rotarians are there to answer the bell, Kennedy said.

"It's someone to listen to, and talk to, and help them with assignments," Kennedy said. "We couldn't have asked for a better partnership. The kids say things like 'they do fun stuff,' and 'they help me.' You don't have to pull it out of them, they know exactly how they feel about the Rotary (members) coming here."

Muir and McGroarty work alongside Rotarians Nic Carey and Jim Beattie. Rotarian Sandra Brewster volunteers at the junior school in Stirling.

Muir said he enjoys getting to know the students. As a business owner volunteering at the school is his way of giving back to a community.

"It's being in touch with the kids, and being locally connected to the town," he said. "The kids get to know you. It's challenging but fun."

Another aspect of the Rotary's involvement in the school is the Mr. Nobody program for Grade 7 students. Each class starts with a plain blue doll - a nobody - and as they work together, the doll starts to transform into a somebody.

McGroarty explained that students can pick an animal, environmental or humanitarian project.

"They physically go out into the community, and they write a report and present it," he said.

When the students finish their community work, they choose something to symbolize what they've done.

"And when they come back and they put it on Mr. Nobody, suddenly he becomes Mr. Somebody," he said.

Students have visited the Stirling Manor, or volunteered at the veterinarian hospital, Kennedy said. The program helps them establish goals and build character.

"it's that bit of kindness and caring they are taking out of school and into the community," Kennedy said.

As well, the students have a chance to be given the Rotary Award upon graduation. It recognizes community involvement and leadership, which the Mr. Nobody

"We're here for anyone," McGroarty said. "We devote our time and interest, and it benefits the students."

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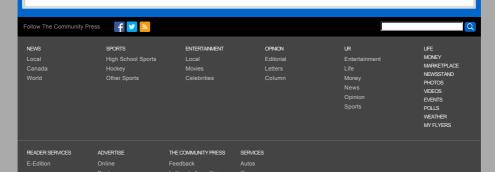
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