Becoming somebody

Students learn about what it means to build character

Mysterious boxes arrived in the classrooms marked "To: Everybody, From: Nobody" and when opened, inside was a featureless soft doll, about two feet tall and made of denim fabric. It was Nobody.

The Grade 7 and 8 classes at CML Snider School in Wellington were participating in a program called "Who is Nobody?" and throughout the school year the students mission was to help Nobody become Somebody through actions that serve others.

The program was introduced to the school by Wendy MacFarlane, child and youth counsellor for the Hastings Prince Edward District School Board, and paid for through a donation from the Wellington Rotary Club. "Who is Nobody?" is meant, in part, to develop character, teach responsibility, community involvement both locally and globally, encourage initiative and build self-esteem.

"It's about teaching the kids that one person can make a difference and that by each contributing they can change the world piece by piece, little by little," said MacFarlane. "Whether it's helping a neighbour; whether it's raising money or raising awareness or helping someone across the world, that each of us can make a difference; that each person can make our mark on the world.

Each participating student chose an independent project involving people, animals or the environment. They each took their turn taking Nobody home. They wrote essays and drew pictures about what they did to make a difference. These works were then compiled into a scrap book. They also had to attach an object to Nobody to represent the experience, thus transforming it with every trip home.

Last Friday students presented their dressed-up Nobodys and their books at a school assembly. The projects were

wide and varied: Cassandra Buckley collected funds for Loyalist Humane Society while Tessa Vincent chose to raise money to buy chickens for a family in Africa.

The students were surprised at the involvement of their peers, claiming everyone rose to the occasion.

"People that normally wouldn't go out of their way to help other people did it, and enjoyed doing it" said Terpstra.

"It taught everybody something and made them feel like they can make a difference," added Libby Root, who volun-

PHOTO: KATHLEEN SABYAN

Nobody one and Nobody two join seven of the 50 students from grades seven and eight at C.M.L. Snider School. The figures debuted at a Friday assembly at the school and the students who presented at the assembly were, front row (left to right) Jordan Terpstra, Tessa Vincent, Megan MacLeod, Melanie Whitteker; back row (left to right) Cassidy Allison, Cassandra Buckley and Libby Root.

teered her time to the local animal shelter. "You don't have to do something huge; just one thing can make a difference."

Unanimously the students felt the need for the program to continue at the school. They referred to the website (www.whoisnobody.com) to listen to the "Nobody" theme song, and then they joined together and sang the chorus by heart:

Who Is Nobody, is it Somebody you know?
Who Is Nobody, we can all learn to grow.
'Cause Everybody is Somebody you know and
Everybody is Somebody you know.

"In our smaller community of Prince Edward County we need to look beyond the bridges," said MacFarlane. "We need to think of how we can help others."

MacFarlane hopes to expand the program to more schools around the County for next year.