

# Michael J. Brennan school to live on

Spirit of closing school to continue on at St. James

COMMUNITY Jun 23, 2014 by Mike Zettel Niagara This Week - St. Catharines



Kindergarten students Caitlynn Czeban and Aubrey Lagrotteria hold up Mr. Nobody, which has now been renamed Michael J. Brennan after the school's namesake. - Mike Zettel/staff photo

Those with young children may be familiar with [Mr. Nobody](#).

He's a blue, featureless doll who, after being given to students, develops personality traits – and eventually a name.

When Mr. Nobody was brought to Michael J. Brennan Catholic Elementary School, he became somebody special.

The north end St. Catharines school, which – unique to Niagara – shares its gym and library with the adjacent District School Board of Niagara school, Pine Grove, is closing its doors for the final time this summer. About a third of the students will go to St. Ann's in Port Dalhousie, while the balance will attend St. James.

But school parent Bianca Perron, who's taking child and youth studies at Brock University, wanted to help make sure the spirit of the school lived on.

Enter Mr. Nobody, who she was introduced to at Brock.

In May, Perron introduced the 177 students to the doll, and over the next few weeks, they performed a variety of good deeds, creating little reminder mementos to pin on it.

"I thought it would be a nice way to close the doors and show St. Catharines what kind of children are leaving these walls," she said.

Last Thursday, Perron brought Mr. Nobody in for the final time and presented the school with a scrapbook detailing their accomplishments, which included selling bracelets to raise funds for Gillian's Place, donating hair for Locks of Love and even such little things as buying an arcade ticket for a little boy who wanted to win a stuffed teddy bear.

"This is an accumulation of their hard work," she said of the scrapbook and doll to be displayed in the St. James library, which will be named after Michael J. Brennan. "The children will be constantly reminded of how in society they need to give back and put others before themselves."

The doll will also help the school's name live on. Michael J. Brennan was a well-respected lawyer and crown attorney in St. Catharines. He was also a long-time Catholic school board trustee and for years donated legal services to the board.

When it came to give Mr. Nobody a proper name, the choice was obvious and near unanimous among the students.

After the name was unveiled, Perron told the kids the school's namesake will be carried on – through the doll and themselves.

"Each one of you is a member of Michael J. Brennan forever."

by **Mike Zettel**  
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