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Children learning how to make a difference by playing with Nobody

ALISON LANGLEY

Local News - Wednesday, March 14, 2007 @ 02:00

Everybody is a somebody with Nobody.

That's the goal of a new outreach project to be implemented at a number of Niagara Falls elementary schools within the Niagara Catholic District School Board.

Who Is Nobody is a provincewide program that demonstrates to children how they can make a difference locally, nationally and globally.

Several teachers were given a sneak peek at the upcoming project Thursday when program founder Kelly Clark visited St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Elementary School.

"This will instil in them strength. It lets children find their potential and their passion," Clark said as she held up "Nobody," a large, faceless denim doll.

Students take turns keeping the doll for a week and must add something to the doll that represents what they have done to help others.

If, for example, a child encouraged family members to step up recycling efforts, he could affix a pull tab from a soda can to the doll.

The 3-D mementoes are only limited by their imagination, Clark said. A student can perform a play about global warming and pin the script to the doll or sew a piece of a fleece to the doll after organizing a used blanket drive for an animal shelter.

The students then present the doll and their story to their classmates.

Over the course of the school year, the doll will go from being a "Nobody," a doll with no character, to a "Somebody," who has lots of character as a result of the students' efforts.

"It helps young people figure out their unique strengths and build respect by using their strengths to help others," Clark said.

The real-life activities exercise responsible citizenship, promotes social skills and builds character and self-esteem, she added.

The program will be implemented at St. Vincent de Paul, St. Patrick, St. Gabriel Lalemant, Sacred Heart, Mary Ward and Notre Dame schools.

Teachers Kyle Rufrano and Marylee Kelly plan to incorporate Who Is Nobody? into their writer's workshop program at Mary Ward.

"This is a very good idea for our kids," Rufrano said.

The program is sponsored by the Niagara Falls Sunrise Rotary Club and The Printing House.

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