

Who is nobody? Not these kids, A Rabbi and the Arnprior Rotary Club help inspire social change in local elementary aged students

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EMC News - The students of Meadowlands Public School received a special gift on Nov. 15 in the form of a new 'Who Is Nobody?' kit, delivered by Rabbi Reuven Bulka and Rotary Club of Arnprior president Dave Palmer.

The kit arrived as the school planned to repeat its success with last year's efforts.

So, just what is the 'Who Is Nobody?' program?

Essentially, it is a way of spurring elementary school-aged kids into works of social action. The kit includes a featureless doll called Nobody, over the course of the first week, students of the class decide what environmental or social cause they'd like to help, plan their course of action, and then pin their plan on the doll.

The doll is a symbolic representation of the student participants. By enacting positive change in their community and world, the students prove to themselves that they are a 'somebody'.

"(The doll) is pretty plain and bland, but what you achieve with your efforts gives Nobody character," explained Palmer, who introduced the students to the term 'vocation' and encouraged them to continue their social action in the future. "I hope the idea stays with you."

Last year's participating class - Pam Park's grade 4/5 class - were on hand to tell Rabbi Bulka and Palmer about their experience with the program, and presented the men with a book chronicling their efforts.

Jared Sanders, then a Grade 4 student, organized a 'Shoes for Haiti' drive in the wake of that country's devastating earthquake, ultimately delivering 200 donated pairs of shoes to the impoverished nation via the Red Cross.

"I brought in a box, got my class involved, and made announcements," said Jared. "The whole school ended up getting involved."

Gabriella Rabbaa, then a Grade 5 student, organized a food drive - but not for people. Rather, the food raised went to feed the rapidly multiplying stray cats that reside on her street. Forty tins of wet food and two bags of dry food later, Gabriella feels good about what she did.

"It was really fun," she said. "You don't need to put in years of effort to make change happen. I figured out what I was good at and made a change."

Joining last year's Who Is Nobody? class for the presentation was this year's recipients of the kit, the grade 4/5 class of Aly Marcotte-Willison. Rabbi Bulka addressed all of the students when he said, "Next time you see someone down in the dumps, feeling like a nobody...do something to make them feel like a somebody. The only way you can go forward in life is by knowing you're making a difference. Keep on growing."

The Who Is Nobody program has been in existence for a few years, the nature of the program ties in well with the traits the school is trying to follow and build upon, said educational assistant Christine Daze.

"Last year we were involved with Pennies for Peace and raised \$1,000," said Daze. "We're also involved in the Me to We program, and that led us to go down to their conference on Nov. 12 - that was also spearheaded by Pam Parks. We all jump on board when these projects come along."

Daze said that the school's character education is curriculum-based and allows the students to gain a better understanding of the many issues affecting the people of the world.

"It gives them a chance to make their way in the world," said Daze. "They get to be a role model and still be a kid."

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