

# Local students find out 'Who Is Nobody?'

*Rotary club helping spread the program throughout the province*

By Moya Dillon

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**BOWMANVILLE** -- With help from the local Rotary club, St. Stephen's Secondary School students recently completed a new program designed to get them to reach out and help their community.

The Who Is Nobody? program uses a five-step, choose your own adventure style lesson to get students to apply their own creative talents to a charity project in the community.

"So often in schools everyone is put in the same group," said Kelly Clark, the director and co-developer of the program. "This gets them to become entrepreneurial and design a project through choices. Some students might write a song about the environment, another painted a picture to give to a senior in a retirement residence who didn't get very many visitors, and another made bracelets to sell for cancer research."

Although the program began in 2006, it has seen a large expansion thanks to Rotary clubs of Ontario, which donated starting kits to local schools such as St. Stephen's, where Mrs. Gribben-Walsh's Grade 9 religion class took on the project.

"It really made them think of their community in a way they might not have before," Mrs. Gribben-Walsh said of the students. "As a teacher I was interested in how it might make them think about possible future careers and jump-start their community service hours, which they need to graduate. It really made everyone aware of those hours really early, so they can put more work and thought into how they use them to help their community."

To begin, students choose a cause -- people, the environment or animals -- then decide whether to donate time, materials or money before they create their own unique project.

The program itself comes in the form of a suitcase that includes all the course materials. The most important of these is a simple denim gingerbread doll. This doll, called Nobody, goes home with each student for one week while they complete their project. The student then adds something to the doll that has significance for their project.

"Over the year Nobody becomes Somebody and reflects the things the students have done," Mrs. Clark said. "It's just to make character education tangible. They start with a clean slate and end up with something the whole class is part of in a really personal



Kelly Clark photo

## Students Chloe Goodale and Jen Albert with the Nobody doll.

way."

Mrs. Clark said she has received great feedback about the project, with teachers reporting an increase in confidence and self-esteem and, in many cases, improved overall grades.

At St. Stephen's the student projects varied from reading to kindergarten students, to teaching primary school students snowboarding to donating money for children in Africa through World Vision.

Grade 9 student Nick Ratchford said helping out at Holy Family elementary school's ski club, where he taught students from Grade 1 through 4 to snowboard, made him realize he'd like to teach snowboarding as a job and taught him a few things about children.

"I thought it would be a really interesting, rewarding experience," he said. "Mostly I learned you have to be positive with them, because if you're negative they don't like it and they won't learn."

Jen Albert, who helped out in her father's Grade 8 classroom, also learned a few new things.

"When you work with kids you learn a lot of responsibilities you didn't have before," she said. "You learn you have to respect them and be a good role model."

Chloe Goodale, who picked up garbage around her community, has a newfound respect for the environment and said she thought the project really opened up her eyes to the wider community.

For Mrs. Clark, these are exactly the types of insights she was aiming for when she created the program.

"A lot of times you can get so focused on your own life and your own problems that it teaches them it's easy to build empathy just even by listening to other kids in their class and what they chose for their projects," she said.

"It makes them realize how lucky they are by realizing what's going on in other parts of the world."

For more information on the Who Is Nobody? program visit [www.whoisnobody.com](http://www.whoisnobody.com).