

# Everybody is Somebody with **NOBODY**

By Lori Abbott



**This NOBODY became SOMEBODY with the help of teacher Kelly Clark.**

Eight of Hannah's grade 2 classmates stand outside at recess with clipboards in hand, determined to collect as many signatures as possible in an effort to raise awareness for animal rights. Robbie, Hannah's classmate, puts a collection box in a local coffee shop to collect old reading glasses to send to the less fortunate in Africa.

Hannah and Robbie's grade 2 class at Forest Hill PS joins the ranks of 29 schools across the TDSB that have had the opportunity to participate in the *it-Kit* Character Education Program. Kelly Clark, full-time TDSB teacher and *it-Kit* creator, first came up with the concept while supply teaching in England.

"Being in a cross section of schools, I realized that the challenges and opportunities are all the same everywhere," said Clark. "Both hinge on respect. When students do not respect themselves or others, they have low self esteem and are affected by peer pressure and bullying. When students have mutual respect, they are open to learning and sharing with each other."

Clark believes that interests and abilities are the foundation for mutual respect. "I wanted to give kids a simple recipe to help them understand, use, and share their unique interests and abilities, in order to help others and ultimately help themselves."

Enter *it-Kit*, a five-step character education program that fits easily into existing programs and is simple to set up and maintain.

Teachers have a broad spectrum of subjects. *it-Kit* is something that connects and gives context to what students and teachers are already doing, by applying everything students learn to real world activities while bringing the curriculum to life.

Starting with a denim doll without any features, the 'character' of the doll starts to take shape through the vision of each individual student, and is created as students execute self-directed, decision-making steps that build a personal project.

Respect yourself and respect all others, students are reminded as they set out to choose a living thing to help. From creating pamphlets for distribution, inviting guest speakers into the classroom, making announcements to raise awareness, donating materials like pop can tabs for wheel chairs, or finding time to do things like shovelling snow for the elderly, students can choose any activity as long as it uses their interests and abilities.

Students then add a three-dimensional attachment to the *NOBODY* doll that represents what they've done, turning *NOBODY* into somebody! For instance, if a student decides they are going to make a compost area in their family's garden, they can sew a plastic shovel to the doll as a symbol.

Finally, students reflect on their actions by writing stories about their projects and drawing pictures that capture their experiences. They present their individual work to the class and each student's story and picture then goes into a class scrapbook that, along with *NOBODY*, demonstrates how everybody's individual efforts are part of the greater whole.

With 104 signatures, seven-year-old Hannah achieved what she had set out to do. A letter from Stephen Harper, federal Leader of the Opposition in one hand, and Jack Layton, federal Leader of the New Democratic Party in the other, Hannah can be proud of what she has contributed to her class' *it-Kit*. But more importantly, Hannah can be proud of the awareness she has raised in her effort to eliminate cruelty to animals.

For his part, Robbie collected more than 100 pairs of reading glasses that were sent off to Africa with the assistance of World Vision Canada.

"It spans far beyond a school project at this point," Clark added. "These students are reaching out and realizing their potential and the potential their actions have, not only on their community but on the world."

*NOBODY* kits are available for all schools and classes. For more information, e-mail [info@onebackyard.com](mailto:info@onebackyard.com).



**Robbie collected more than 100 pairs of reading glasses to send to Africa.**

[www.whoisnobody.com](http://www.whoisnobody.com)  
email: [info@whoisnobody.com](mailto:info@whoisnobody.com)  
phone: (416) 333 7774