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Allyson Snelling | Apr 07, 2010 - 10:09 AM

Doll helps students build character

GRAVENHURST — Character building has taken on the form of a doll at Gravenhurst Public School.

Students in Kelly Gates' Grade 5 class are participating in Who is Nobody? — a program that revolves around a featureless two-foot doll made of denim.

Gates explained the doll has no name, no gender, no personality, no interests, no age and no character. It's up to the students to provide those things to turn Nobody into somebody.

"They take a blank Nobody doll and turn it into somebody by performing random acts of kindness," said Gates. "To be somebody is about good character. At the end, we will end up with a very decorated doll."

Each student has a turn to take the doll home for a week and use the doll to help people, animals or the environment. After their Who is Nobody experience, the students add something three-dimensional to the doll that represents what they've done. They also write a report, which they present to the class.

"The kids are pretty excited about it," said Gates. "It's a great program."

She has been amazed at how the project has motivated students and what they have done in response to the assignment.

"I think they like the idea of being highlighted for doing something good," she said. "The ones that are going to run with it, fly with it."

Emily Tingey spent the past week with the doll, collecting food for the Gravenhurst Salvation Army food bank.

Going door to door in her neighbourhood, Emily collected 146 food items with help from a few friends.

"I noticed a food bank website and I saw the number of meals served by food banks across Canada," she said.

After completing her assignment, Emily added a banana-shaped smile to the doll.

Another student in the class, Sienna White, tackled gender equality and intertwined pink and blue pipe cleaners for a necklace.

Mitchell Brock cared for his neighbour's dog while the neighbour was away. He added some fur to the doll.

Jackson Brabander researched websites for donations to Haiti earthquake victims and left a Canadian Red Cross lanyard around Nobody's neck with the list of websites.

Riley Gauthier made bookmarks to fundraise money so the school can purchase another Nobody doll for other grades to enjoy, while Ethan Coad made posters to promote a hunger website.

At the end of the year, the class hopes to use any funds raised through the project to help underprivileged children in Africa.



BUILDING CHARACTER. Gravenhurst Public School Grade 5 student Emily Tingey collected non-perishable food items in her Gravenhurst neighbourhood as part of the Who is Nobody? project at school. The featureless denim doll (pictured with Tingey) will be outfitted with three-dimensional objects to represent the random acts of kindness the students perform with the doll to help give it character. *Photo by Allyson Snelling*

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