

Building character through acts of kindness

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Grade 5 and 6 students at Muskoka Beechgrove Public School are learning it's better to give than receive.

By participating in the Nobody doll project, students have helped their neighbours, their family, the greater community, and even those living on another continent.

The exercise recently came to fruition when students put the finishing touches on the doll after performing character-building acts of kindness on their own time over Christmas.

"Nobody," as the doll is called, started out as a featureless two-foot doll made of denim. The doll has no name, no gender, no personality, no interests, no age and no character.

It was up to the students to provide those things to turn Nobody into somebody.

Now the doll is decorated with a variety of three-dimensional items that represent the students' charitable acts.

Students found the experience both heart-warming and personally satisfying and rewarding, they said.

Jazmine Engel said she learned to put others before herself, while Josh Barrett learned it can be fun to give to others.

"I learned that even though we're small we can make a big difference," said Emily Hachmer.

"I learned it's better to give than receive," said Braden Jennings.

Students worked in groups or pairs or on their own. The key was to do something for someone that they already weren't doing.

"They had to come up with the idea," explained teacher Alison Durocher. "We were shocked by the range of ideas they came up with. At Christmastime, kids get so many gifts, so it was really nice for them to give back."

Kayleigh Cook added the teachers were impressed by how students took the project to heart and ran with it.

"They really wanted to give the doll the character," she said.

Jack Lorenz and Brennen Norman chose to support the Wheels for Learning project in Cambodia, spearheaded by local Rotarian Lisa McCoy. They raised \$115 by holding a bake sale at Gravenhurst High School and purchased two bikes for two Cambodian students so they can travel to school.

Cheyenne Fraser donated food and clothing to the local Salvation Army.

"It made me feel good giving clothes that I don't wear anymore to someone who needs them," she said.

Mason Labrash filled a shoebox with school supplies, a blanket and toys and sent it overseas through an international organization.

Holly Smith and Paisley Gliddon presented a PowerPoint presentation on cancer awareness to their peers, while Dion Lyons cleaned the fish tanks at The Pines Long-Term Care Residence in Bracebridge.

Makaila Winters baked treats to accompany two Christmas food hampers donated by teachers at Beechgrove, and Thomas Way supported a petition for a dog park in town.

Heidi Pedersen made dog cookies and raised \$72 for the OSPCA, while Chris Kerswell grew flowers from seeds and gave them away.

Ivy Baird played cards with an elderly lady and several students helped neighbours by shovelling snow and walking dogs.



CHARACTER BUILDING.. More than 50 Grade 5 and 6 students at Muskoka Beechgrove Public School learned it's better to give than receive after working on the Nobody doll project where students made charitable contributions to society to build character for a featureless doll.