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## Turning Nobody into a somebody

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Who is Nobody?

That's the question Anne-Marie Sajecki's Grade 3 class is trying to answer.

Eighteen students at Kensal Park public school in London are taking part in the [Who Is Nobody? program](#). "Nobody" is a blue, 60-centimetre-long doll with no features that each student must help turn into a somebody.

Students do this by carrying out volunteer projects in the community. When they've completed their project, each student adds a 3-D attachment – associated with the work they've done – to the doll to build its character.

"It's their first really big project that they do," said Sajecki. "The program is an amazing way for kids to have a hands-on experience exploring character attributes."

Who Is Nobody? was created for students in grades 1 to 12 by Toronto teacher Kelly Clark in 2002. She said her students knew the importance of respect but didn't know how to build it.



*Photo by Christian Bergmeister*

**Madison Jones, 9, holds the Nobody doll alongside her Grade 3 teacher, Anne-Marie Sajecki, at Kensal Park public school.**

"I wanted to give my students a simple framework that supported them in figuring out their interests and using them to help others so that they could experience building respect in a way that was personal, earned and lasting," said Clark.

But respect isn't the only quality students learn about in the program. They also learn about other attributes such as optimism, responsibility, honesty and empathy, which they teach the Nobody doll.

Each week, a student takes the Nobody doll home to complete a write-up describing their volunteer work and add the 3-D attachment. Sajecki's class started the program in January and will finish in May.

So far, Sajecki's students have completed a wide range of projects for local and international causes.

Emma Waight, 8, collected eyeglasses for the Lions Club's eyeglass recycling program. In conjunction with the Ivey Eye Institute, the club donates glasses to people in developing countries.

Eight-year-old Quinn Kearney offered a free snow shovelling service to his neighbours and created a flyer to spread the word.

"It's exciting to see how far they will take it," said Sajecki.

Madison Jones is taking it as far as she can. The nine-year-old student is trying to raise awareness about cleft lip condition through [Operation Smile](#), a charity that provides cleft lip surgeries for children all over the world.

Madison's initial goal was to raise \$960 to help four children with cleft lip but she has already raised over \$1,600 for Operation Smile.

"I'm really proud of her," said Madison's mother, Kim. "She's helping people for the rest of their lives."

To assist her fundraising efforts, Madison started her own page on the [Operation Smile website](#) where people can make online donations. She has also started a [blog](#).

"I send thank-yous to everybody who donates," said Madison, who is quite computer savvy according to her mother.

So what will Madison be adding to the Nobody doll?

"I'm putting on a smile," said Madison, who will add her attachment to the doll when she takes it home on April 5.

When Madison takes the doll back to school on April 12, she will make a class presentation about her project. Students in Sajecki's class will also be putting their project photos and write-ups in a scrapbook, which keeps a record of their progress.

Sajecki said she likes the program because it builds literacy, incorporating reading, writing, oral and visual communication, and because it fits into Kensal Park's focus on character development.

After convincing her principal to help fund the \$400 cost of the education kit, Sajecki said that other teachers at the school are getting curious about the Who Is Nobody? program and that it's gaining more attention.

She said she is happy to see the initiative her students have taken and how much effort they have put into their projects.

"They've learned a lot," said Sajecki. "They're doing something that they take pride in and they see it's making a difference and it's impacting the outside world – it's a huge step."

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