

Local Students Show Community Caring

by Tonya Harrison, Principal
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“Feed a man a fish, he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish, and he eats for a lifetime.” I had a poster in my classroom with this proverb on it and students would say, “Mrs. Harrison, why do you have that poster up? The saying is so old.” My response was that the proverb teaches us how to be responsible people who care about those around us. With puzzled faces, the students would turn and walk away, but I knew they were thinking “how does fishing teach me about responsibility and caring about people?” The seed was planted.

The state government is doing its best to raise standards in the classroom to help Michigan students keep up with the national and global standards. In the process, some legislators thought it would be relevant to add “service learning” to the criteria and many people responded with counter arguments that students do not have the time nor do they want to participate in helping communities. Students, especially high school students, are too wrapped up in themselves to complete “service learning projects.” Mandating these hours in the state curriculum would be tough, but as I look at the students in Reed City, I see young people who are more than willing to challenge the status quo opinion about kids.

Throughout our district, students are rising to the challenge of reaching out and being responsible community members who are learning about “fishing” and caring about others. Every building in the district has participated in projects where the adults and students are reaching out to the community members in Reed City and in places as far away as Iraq.

Norman Elementary students have been sending care packages to service men and woman in Iraq. This month, they will begin a “Pennies for Heaven” project, where the students will collect pennies as a cancer support project. The Middle School has an annual canned food drive, where this past November they collected close to 2,000 items for the local food pantry. Students also provided needy families with Christmas gifts, so young children wouldn’t go without a “visit from Santa.” At the High School, students pinned hats and mittens to a “mitten tree” and delivered all the items to Norman Elementary. Every year RCHS students help plant flowers in Reed City and pick up trash along the high way. Alternative Education students at Community High helped sort food items with a local senior group in November and will bowling in March for Big Brothers Big Sisters.

I think Reed City young people are showing they understand what fishing has to do with caring about others and the proverb is entirely relevant. The old phrase “these are our future leaders” scares many people when they read in the paper or watch on the news stories about a minority of young people who appear to be out of control. From where I stand, the future looks promising.