South Nodaway students waddle with excellence in character

These waddles have older students as role models for the younger kids. They know them by name, set an example for them and are someone the youngsters can come to for anything. Bauman said this helps to build a greater sense of community and family and is an ideal way to teach excellence in character.

Following the penguin theme, the district took every elementary student to see the new penguin movie “Happy Feet.” Bauman said this is a reward for the good character they have demonstrated over the past few months, but she also wants to use it as a teaching tool.

“We want to tie in the character traits to the movie,” Bauman said. Some of those traits include responsibility, respect, cooperation and perseverance.

In addition to the penguin theme, the school has other projects and ways to promote character education. Some of them include:

• Dressed up as cowboys for the city parade, carried a sign that read “Cowpokes with Character” and handed out brochures to people along the parade route.
• Had a “Court of Characters” for Homecoming, where they carried shields and poles with the character traits displayed.
• Place the character trait on the school website, on signs and posters in school hallways and on bulletin boards in classrooms.
• Hand out brochures and have PA announcements at sporting events about the character initiative and trait of the month.
• Post the character word and a quote in the announcements each day.
• Teacher and guidance lesson plans that support the word of the month.
• Professional development that is geared toward character education.
• Monday morning conversations revolving around the character trait of the month.
• “Class with Character” - the students in the class that has shown the most character over the month will be given cut-outs of the school’s mascot, the Longhorns. They will then be required to give those out to other students they see showing character excellence. At the end of the month, the cut-outs will be tallied and the class with the most will then be the next “Class with Character.”
• Character education T-shirts were purchased by the school for every elementary student. They were specially wrapped and opened during Homecoming week and worn to the pep assembly. They purchased 50 extra to give to high school students who show good character throughout the year.

Bauman said all of these ideas have been implemented within the last year, when the South Nodaway schools got involved in the regional project. A team of parents, board members, teachers and students initially joined together to make plans and since then, the school counselor, Nick Wray, has been very instrumental in continuing to foster and carry out new ideas for the school.

While this initiative is something relatively new to the region, Bauman said these concepts aren’t new to the district.
“We told the teachers character education wasn’t anything new,” Bauman stated. “We just need to emphasize it more... and they use it in their everyday language.”
Along with the teachers, Bauman said the parents are also an important aspect to the school’s success.
“The parents are doing a good job of emphasizing it at home,” Bauman said. “That’s the key component; it’s not just something at school, it’s a way of life.”
South Nodaway elementary exemplifies how character education is a community effort. The students, faculty and families rely on one another, they help teach each other and they work together, just like so many of their penguin friends.

**Local church stepping up for good character**
The Northwest Missouri Culture of Character invites everyone to join in demonstrating character excellence in the region.
West Nodaway School District was featured in last week’s article on character education, which they have been doing for the past five years. This week will feature the First Christian Church in Maryville. They have only been involved for the past few weeks, which shows that it’s never too late to jump on board with promoting the regional initiative or in promoting good character.
“We’re excited,” Erin Yates, interim Christian education director, said, “although we haven’t done a whole lot yet because we’re so new to this.”
Yates is hoping to promote character education within their different capacities to all of their church members and to the community.
“We want to help build those skills because we have people of all ages here,” Yates said.
In the short few weeks that the church has been working on this, they have been able to implement good character in several ways, including posting the word of the month in the weekly bulletin, writing it on the secretary’s marker board and having a bulletin board dedicated to the word. This bulletin board has an area for ongoing projects that deal with the word and also an area where everyone can write ideas down to share with others of how they are using the word.
Steven Churchill, interim pastor, is also reminding the congregation of what the word of the month is at the end of his weekly sermons. He offers ways in which they can show good character and also uses his own personal experiences. For the month of November, with citizenship being the word, he encouraged the church members to get out and vote.
Also this month, Yates said the youth group, from third to twelfth grade, is getting very involved. They helped to gather food for the food pantry to show citizenship or being loyal to their community.
She also said they are gearing up for December. The word for that month is compassion and they will be making and handing out cards at their Christmas Fair.
Yates is hoping to inspire everyone to use the traits in any way possible to support the cause.
“We want to encourages our community to be responsible, respectful and contributing citizens to help make our world a better place to live,” Yates said. For more information or to become a partner like the First Christian Church, call the Northwest RPDC at 1-800-663-3348 or check out their website at www.nwpace.org.

Culture of Character reaches out to all, invites others to participate

Schools, businesses, industries, families and communities - the Northwest Missouri Regional Culture of Character (COC) is a collaborative effort of all of these people working together to improve the overall climate of our community. Their motto is “setting the PACE,” which stands for Partners Achieving Character Excellence.

It began several years ago with a concern expressed from area industries on the character of their workforce. The “Education of the Workforce” subcommittee of the Heartland Foundation Regional Planning Forum responded to the concern in the fall of 2004. They identified the need to develop a regional emphasis on the character of the current and future workforce.

From this subcommittee came what is now known as the Northwest Missouri Regional Culture of Character Project. It was generated as a comprehensive strategy to encourage a resilient character ethic in the minds and hearts of the current and future generations who will make up the region’s workforce.

Their primary goals are: 1. to create a culture at school, in the workplace, in the community and in the home, where character building is the norm and not the exception and 2. to purposely create a diversified learning-space for conversations to take place between the student, teacher, child, parent, employer and employee.

“We can build a culture of character in our homes, schools, businesses and community where respect, dignity, honesty, integrity and responsibility are the norm,” Julia Schmitz, regional technical assistance coach of the RPDC, said. “I look forward to living in that culture where everyone shows genuine care and concern. Character education is the way to create such a culture.”

The COC, in collaboration with citizens of Northwest Missouri, selected 12 character traits that they feel are essential to meeting these goals. They are: January - tolerance; February - honesty; March - cooperation; April - perseverance; May - patience; June - confidence; July - integrity; August - responsibility; September - respect; October - self-control; November - citizenship and December - compassion.

The project was initially directed to include the counties of Nodaway, Worth and Atchison with the hope of expanding to other areas each year, but they have already had schools and businesses from other counties asking to be involved. To date, the COC has 91 partners. Schmitz said they believe there are a lot of things going on in the region that they don’t know about yet, so she encourages
schools, churches, businesses and other groups to contact the COC to join with them in demonstrating character excellence in our region. There is no cost to become a partner.

In doing so, they only ask that groups do one thing each month that corresponds with the trait of the month. Some possibilities include posting the word of the month on marqueses or websites, including it in newsletters, bulletins or programs, printing it on receipts or billing statements or using it in staff training or team meetings.

The schools partnering with the COC are: Fairfax R-III, Horace Mann Lab School, Jefferson C-123, Maryville R-II, Mound City R-II, Nodaway-Holt R-VII, North Andrew R-VI, North Nodaway R-VI, Northeast Nodaway R-V, Rock Port R-II, Tarkio R-I, South Holt R-I, South Nodaway R-IV, West Nodaway R-I and Worth County R-III.

Businesses, churches and other groups partnering with the COC are from the following communities: Albany, Fairfax, Guilford, Hopkins, Maryville, Rock Port, Ravenwood, St. Joseph and Tarkio.

For more information or to become a partner, visit their website www.nwpace.org or call toll-free 1-800-663-3348.

Farm folk knows stick-to-it

Farm folk knows stick-to-it

This month's character trait within the Partners Achieving Character Excellence (PACE) can be found all over Northwest Missouri and even back to biblical times.

Perseverance is what has made this country what it is today. The Founding Fathers had persevered through some difficult times of tyranny and then war before they penned the Declaration of Independence. Those who discovered the Wild West with all of its treasures and freedoms truly understood the word perseverance. The farmer during the depression days of the 30s lived and survived because of perseverance. In my lifetime, the farmer of the 1980s also persevered through some real tough times.

I've even tasted perseverance. In the first few months of the Nodaway News Leader's life, financial times were hard. Days and nights, were long. The mail seemed to be filled with more bills than subscription checks. To put out the kind of news product that I envisioned took a lot of people and these employees expected to be paid every other Monday. Imagine that.

After the first three months, the dream began to fade. I can remember driving home on Thursday late afternoons from getting the paper printed, questioning the paper's future as well as my own. I still felt a calling to give the region a worthy newspaper but I began to wonder if there was a better plan to approach this dream. I was more than listening for direction; I was pleading for it. My staff and I persevered.

Then in late June there came a hailstorm on a Tuesday afternoon and while others were scrambling to get their beloved vehicle under cover somewhere; I did not. From the hail stones that peppered the top of our mini-van came my answer. The monies I gained from the insurance company allowed a little more than one
more payroll. That's just what the doctor ordered.

After that it was all roses. Well almost. Anyone who owns a small business demonstrates perseverance on a regular basis. The challenges you face daily of staff, product, facility, regulations and all of those unknowns demands the owner or manager to persevere.

Maybe because it's holy week and possibly because I try hard to imitate the perfect man who walked among humans so long ago, but my mind also recalls Jesus Christ who understood perseverance in his life and especially in his death. His journey to Calvary is probably the best example of someone's perseverance. He was both fully man and fully divine. He had the super power to walk away from the suffering, the pain and leave us to our own fate and eternity. But Jesus loved us so much that He chose to persevere to the bitter end.

And boy, did His perseverance pay off for us. I am so thankful that he was the willing sacrificial lamb. Come resurrection morning we can all benefit from His perseverance.