

Choose Kind

Circleville Middle School(CMS) students are taking the “Kindness Project” that is sweeping the nation one step further in their own hometown. Last spring teacher Brooke Paxton was awarded a mini-grant from Circleville City School Foundation, as well as funding from Academic Booster Club, to purchase copies of the book Wonder by R.J. Palacio for the entire CMS student body. This group book study is entitled “Choose Kind”, and its main focus is to encourage students to be an inspiration to others in their community and beyond.

Palacio’s book focuses on Auggie, a fifth grade boy who is born with a rare genetic condition called Treacher Collins Syndrome. The bones and tissues of the face are underdeveloped with this syndrome. Being enrolled at a prep school after being homeschooled for years due to his health issues brings about many issues for Auggie. Being accepted by his peers and overcoming challenges in and out of the school environment are struggles that Auggie faces on a daily basis. Palacio is adept at emotionally involving her readers in the transformation of individuals in Wonder.

The local “Kindness Project” has prompted students to extend a helping hand outside of the classroom to others in need, who otherwise may do without basic necessities, or to just offer others the gift of time. Among the projects currently in progress are: homemade dog treats for the Pickaway County Dog Shelter, posting inspirational messages on lockers of every student at CMS, working at the community soup kitchen, playing BINGO at a local nursing home, making premie blankets to donate to Nationwide Children’s Hospital, earning money doing odd jobs and soliciting funds from local service groups to help purchase turkeys for Thanksgiving dinner for needy families, collecting gently used sports shoes and equipment for students in need, collecting items for care packages for local servicemen and women, and collecting gently used coats and hats, just to name a few. CMS language arts teachers will decide which projects have made the biggest impact and award those students free tickets to the movie “Wonder”, which all CMS students will be viewing in Lancaster on November 20 or 21.

An adjunct to this Kindness Project and book study is rigorous vocabulary development. Within the classroom the wheel method, as taught by Circleville City School District’s writing specialist, Dr. Dianne McCune, challenges students to synthesize information from their reading using a multitude of different

techniques. Several of these activities are: clustering, metacognition, morphology, diamante, acrostic, Venn diagrams and deciphering quotes.

“Choose Kind” has been a transformational exercise for everyone involved in this project. Reading a quote affixed to Paxton’s wall can even inspire an unassuming visitor. Kindness is contagious, so let’s hope that more people “catch it” in our community.

