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First Grade Students Earn Positive Office Referral Awards

SEPTEMBER 29TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

First Grade Students Earn Positive Office Referral Awards

Dexter, Missouri - Southwest Elementary honored First Grade students with Positive Office Referral certificates.

This award was presented to students who consistently showed the 3R's RESPECTFUL, RESPONSIBLE, and READY TO LEARN.

Each student received a certificate and a FREE Taco from Taco Bell.

Front row from left to right: Autumn Fees, Ryleigh Edwards, Emry Joyner, and Chandler Sluder.

Back row from left to right: Jacob Holden, Eli Null, Luke Hester, and Jack Guethle.

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Kindergarten Students Earn Positive Office Referral Awards

SEPTEMBER 29TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

Kindergarten Students Earn Positive Office Referral Awards

Dexter, Missouri - Southwest Elementary honored Kindergarten students with Positive Office Referral certificates.

This award was presented to students who consistently showed the 3R's RESPECTFUL, RESPONSIBLE, and READY TO LEARN.

Each student received a certificate and a FREE Taco from Taco Bell.

Pictured from left to right are Annabella Bowers, Scout Kennedy, and Bonnie Ryan.

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Therapy Dogs Continue to be Utilized Throughout School System

SEPTEMBER 29TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

Therapy Dogs Continue to be Utilized Throughout School System

Poplar Bluff, MO - A chocolate Lab, certified as a professional therapy dog, recently served to help get apprehensive new students through the classroom door during the first day of school at the Poplar Bluff Early Childhood Center.

Handled by Michelle Caswell, who teaches 3-year-olds in an integrated classroom, Hope is the latest in a tradition of service animals that have been utilized in various ways throughout the R-I district to provide a calming effect on students.

Donated by dog breeders Dave and Rhonda Bishop of Ellsinore in mid-2018, Hope completed her obedience classes through K9 Biz in Dexter and later passed her public access test through SEMO Dog Trainers in Poplar Bluff.

“In dog training, they train you and you train the dog,” Caswell explained. According to Caswell, Hope already helped forewarn of a seizure a student had suffered during a homebound visit before a hospice nurse was able to come to the boy’s aid. “That [act] alone was worth the two-year wait,” she noted.

Since the 2018/19 school year, Oak Grove Elementary has served as the second home of a Great Dane named Bailey, age 6, who resource teacher Holly Shupe has incorporated into her special education classroom. Beginning in 2012, Junior High counselor Luann Elledge also had a therapy dog named Creggan, an Irish setter now retired, and Lake Road counselor Valerie Duncan owned a Labrador retriever named Aerial, who unfortunately died almost a year ago.

Jenn Nicolini, a Junior High teacher, is scheduled to travel with Elledge to Concordia, Kan., next week to pick up Creggan's successor from Canine Assistance Rehabilitation Education & Services. Several civic organizations, banks, veterinarian offices and other businesses contributed so Nicolini can obtain the weeklong training through the prison reform program, and cover the ancillary costs.

"My goal would be to see every school have a therapy dog to help kids dealing with trauma," Nicolini stated. She recently earned her psychological examiner certificate and specialist degree in counseling through Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau.

Earlier this month, Duncan was once again placed on the CARES waiting list, a process that can take one to two years. She has plans to fundraise to offset the training expense, as handlers are responsible for providing liability insurance, as well as food and veterinarian care for the pet. When Aerial passed away, Duncan said students flooded her office with letters and mementos paying tribute to the beloved dog.

"I didn't realize she meant so much until I saw all of that," recalled Duncan, adding that she felt 'overwhelmed' by the outpouring. "A lot of times kids would come into my office, and they didn't want to talk to me, they wanted to sit down and talk to her."

Back in 2004, Junior High counselor Cindy Jackson, then employed at Lake Road, had perhaps the district's first school dog—Eddie, a Bichon/poodle mix—before obtaining certification was required by the Board of Education, she said.

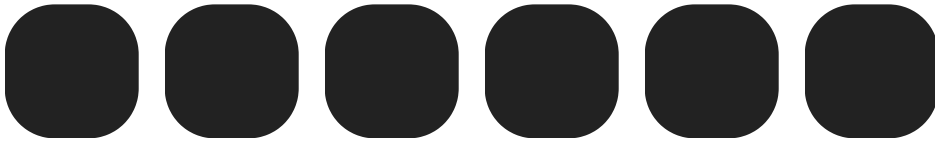
"Since the early 2000s, Poplar Bluff has been a school district that believes in creating a safe, welcoming place for children" through the use of office pets, Jackson commented. "Dogs lighten children's spirits, and provide that unconditional acceptance."

Pictured: Hope, a 2-year-old professional therapy dog, stands in the hallway greeting families on Wednesday, Aug. 26, at the Early Childhood Center.

Article and photos submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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PBMS Tennis Courts Resurfaced Through Partnership

SEPTEMBER 29TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

PBMS Tennis Courts Resurfaced Through Partnership

Poplar Bluff, MO - The tennis courts at the Middle School were resurfaced over the summer for students and patrons to use through an ongoing partnership forged with Poplar Bluff Parks & Recreation.

Lanny Corcimiglia approached the school district with a cost-share proposal soon after being hired as director over the Parks Department late last year. A memorandum of understanding was approved by the R-I Board of Education in February, and General Acrylics of Mount Vernon, Ill., completed the job in June.

"The partnership was relatively easy to establish, and I think it worked out well," said Corcimiglia, who credited John Scott for his liaison work serving as a member of both the school board and the parks board. "Any time you can split cost to allow people to get out and about more... Plus it can be used by the school district as basically an [extension] of the playground for the kids."

According to the bid, resurfacing included power washing, filling cracks, applying acrylic material, striping, painting and installing new nets, plus repairing the birdbaths nearby. Portable pickleball nets were also added. The agreement included sharing maintenance responsibilities.

"The mutual benefit for both parties is to provide another avenue for students and citizens of Poplar Bluff to play tennis/pickleball and continue to participate in a recreational sport for exercise and social activity," wrote R-I Assistant Superintendent of Business Dr. Amy Jackson in the district's board memo

The three courts were previously utilized for practice by PBHS Mules Tennis until the campus along with its athletic facilities moved from the Victory Lane location to Hoover Way in 2016. The old tennis courts were kept open for public use after hours at the now Middle School since they are among the few in town with outdoor lighting.

Pictured: General Acrylics employees resurface the tennis courts at the Poplar Bluff Middle School in June.

Article and photo submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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PBMS Giving Closet Opens for Students in Need

SEPTEMBER 29TH 2020 BY DEE LOFLIN

PBMS Giving Closet Opens for Students in Need

Poplar Bluff, MO - A sixth grade teacher working toward a counseling degree has realized her vision at the Poplar Bluff Middle School this school year, having opened a Giving Closet free for students in need.

With help from family and co-workers, Taytem Eudaley built shelving and racks, and organized inventory that includes clothing, personal hygiene items and school supplies in what once served as the boys' locker room next to E.T. Peters Gym.

Students are referred by teachers or counselors, then they present a voucher to Eudaley, who discreetly takes them 'shopping' at the start of the school day, she said.

"My first year teaching I saw a lot of kids didn't have the bare necessities, and just know you're starting your day at a disadvantage if you're struggling [outside]," Eudaley explained. "This allows us to give anonymously so kids can focus on school stuff instead of home stuff, and they don't have to bring with them that emotional backpack."

At the end of 2019, Eudaley was provided a small budget from administration to purchase bulk supplies such as body wash, and she began soliciting donations through her parish, West Side Church of God, as well as reaching out to other school patrons.

The custodial staff originally built a coat rack, and then over the summer Eudaley completed the layout with assistance from loved ones. There is a separate space that she uses to sort items as they come in. Previously the school had stored some supplies in the nurse's office, according to Eudaley, but the collection was not on display for students to browse

“It was a bit of a mess before with donations lying around, and she basically washed all the clothes and built the shelves over the summer as a project for her master’s program,” said Dr. Josh Teeter, Middle School principal. “The main purpose is to provide clothing for kids who don’t have the means available.”

Some items on the current needs list include toothbrushes and toothpaste, clothing hangers, gently-used backpacks and young adult books, according to Eudaley. She is eventually looking to secure a washer and dryer once a hookup is installed.

The Middle School Giving Closet is modeled in part after a similar operation that runs out of the High School library. Both accept items through the main office of the respective school buildings.

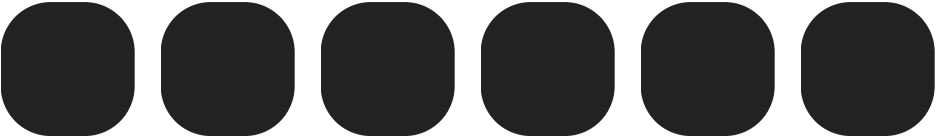
Pictured: Teacher Taytem Eudaley stands next to a Mules display section in the PBMS Giving Closet.

Article and photo submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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