

Summitville Elementary receives kindness certification

- By GARRETT MCDOWELL news@chronicle-tribune.com February 22, 2021

For the second consecutive year, Madison-Grant's Summitville Elementary School has received a kindness certification from The Great Kindness Challenge, a bullying prevention initiative that aims to improve school climate and increase student engagement.

As outlined on its website, The Great Kindness Challenge is one week devoted to performing as many acts of kindness as possible on a school campus. In 2020, more than 28,000 schools participated in The Great Kindness Challenge across 110 countries.

"Using the provided checklist of 50 kind acts, students accept the challenge and show the world that kindness matters," the website states.

While originally scheduled for last week, the severe weather postponed Summitville's Great Kindness Challenge to this week.

Even when it is not the week of The Great Kindness Challenge, Summitville Principal Jackie Samuels said she makes it a point to conclude each morning's announcement message with a key phrase: "Work hard and be kind."

By participating in The Great Kindness Challenge, the school has been able to apply this lesson by teaching its students ways they can implement this mantra.

"We're just really bringing awareness to what it looks like to be kind," Samuels said.

This week of kindness has also impacted the school's curriculum, as teachers have implemented lessons of kindness to teach the students.

"We're really hitting a lot of conversational pieces to build language skills," Samuels said. "Our social-emotional lessons and kindness week have given us lots to talk about. That is important to us."

Tammy Atchison, Summitville Elementary social worker, has been one of the primary orchestrators of this week of kindness.

To create a unifying theme throughout the week, Atchison turned toward Disney to provide a template for various lessons, games and dress-up days for the kids to participate in titled “Kindness is Magical.”

Throughout this week, Summitville Elementary will be sponsoring a Toy Story-themed toy drive which will benefit the Summitville Police Department. The drive will collect comfort items, toys that police officers give to children involved in domestic or traumatic incidents.

Atchison said she hopes learning the importance of kindness will provide the students with a foundation that will pay off later in life.

“Developing good character is going to let them be more apt to be successful in and out of school and the workplace,” Atchison said. “... Learning to treat others with respect, caring for others and not just thinking about ourselves, but realizing that we can be kind without it costing us anything – A simple word or a simple act can change or impact someone in a great way.”