



Premeditated act of kindness: T.F. elementary school students celebrate MLK Day with 'kindness chains'

By Damon Hunzeker - Times-News writer | Posted: Tuesday, January 19, 2010 2:00 am

Nearly 500 Twin Falls kids celebrated Martin Luther King Day by walking into an assembly at Lincoln Elementary School carrying chains — “kindness chains.”

The project coincided with the observance of Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday, but the chains originated from a project called “Rachel’s Challenge,” part of the “Kindness and Compassion Clubs” organized by the family of Rachel Scott, a student who died in the Columbine school shootings. When somebody does something nice, the recipient makes a chain link and connects it to a larger chain. Theoretically, it will set off a “chain reaction” of niceness.

The school started making chains in October and now has 5,726 links.

“That’s a lot of kindness,” counselor Donna Graybill told the students. Each class was given a Lincoln Lions banner emblazoned with their year of graduation — the first-graders picking up their “Class of 2021” banners.

Oregon Trail Elementary School in Twin Falls has been doing the same thing. The plan is to assemble all of the chains and connect the schools at the end of the school year.

“We’re going to win,” fourth-grader Mico Avila said enthusiastically. “We’re going to make it there, and we’re going to go farther than them, too.”

Other kids were less competitive. The acts of kindness can be large or small, but if they’re noticed, they’re documented. One link reads: “Logan showed me kindness by helping with (stuff) on my spy book.”

“We should all be kind and helpful,” second-grader Ashley Hobbs said. “Somebody played with me, and I was alone.”

The kids may not have all understood who Rosa Parks was, but they were absorbed in clips of King’s speeches on a screen in front of the room from a video produced by Hip Hop Official.

Olmstead told the students that it’s a “very special day,” because “we all have the same rights.” After the kids chanted — “We have kindness, yes, we do. We have kindness, how about you?” — she reflected on the program and said while conflict still exists, “They really seem to recognize when kindness is being done.”

Graybill said the goal of the program is to create a mile-long chain.

“We’ve definitely had fewer conflicts than before, and the level of gratitude has increased. There’s a new level of selflessness,” she said.

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