



News Release

Missouri Western State College • 4525 Downs Drive • St. Joseph, MO 64507 • (816) 271-5649

Contact: Kristy Hill

Phone: (816) 271-5649

Title: Public Relations/Marketing Director

Email: hillk@mwsc.edu

WESTERN STUDENTS SERVE AS PUBLIC ACHIEVEMENT COACHES

St. Joseph, Mo.—Nov. 19, 2003— For an hour each week, social work students in Dr. Monica Nandan’s Social Work Practice class at Missouri Western State College are helping elementary school students solve community problems such as stray animals and speeding in school zones.

For the second consecutive year, the college students have been serving as Public Achievement coaches for elementary school children at St. Patrick and Neely Schools in St. Joseph throughout the fall semester.

“The values and principles of Public Achievement are completely in sync with what I teach in my class,” said Dr. Nandan. “My students are teaching children the value of citizenship.”

Senior Melody Grier of Gower, Mo., one of the coaches this year, pointed out that one of the projects completed last year was the park near the two schools.

“But we don’t focus on the end result. It’s the process that is important. The children learn how to get things done, how to research; and they learn about their community,” she said. Grier’s group was trying to come up with solutions for stray dogs in the community.

Junior Ashford, a sixth grader from Neely and a member of the group, said he has

learned about the animal shelter and how to get stray dogs back to their owners since he has been a part of the program. “They (animals) can bite little kids and hurt them,” he said.

“We just guide the children,” said Grier. “Public Achievement is all about the children doing it on their own. When the children come up with the ideas on their own, they are more willing to do the work.”

Senior Rachel Seaton of Kahoka, Mo., was one for the coaches for a group that was determining the best way to support troops in Iraq. They wanted to show their appreciation for the troops and also find a way to support the soldiers’ families in St. Joseph. Each student had listed three ideas that they shared with the group.

“Now they have to figure out how to accomplish what they want to do,” Seaton said.

Grier said she has enjoyed working with the children, and has learned a lot about the community in the process. “I like working with people. It helps me in my major.”

Grier also noted that she has been able to apply a lot of concepts that she has learned in the classroom to her work with the elementary school students.

Engaging more students in applied learning projects is also one of the goals of the college’s five-year strategic plan. Last year, approximately 74% of graduates participated in applied learning experiences such as independent research, practica, internships, clinicals and student teaching.

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Missouri Western State College is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The college offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.