

Chalkboard

By

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When you read this Christmas will be less than a week away. Depending upon when you get your paper, school will either have just closed for the break or will be finishing up its last day on Wednesday, December 20, 2006. The students and staff, except for the 12-month employees and some coaches and basketball players, are out of school from the end of the day on Wednesday to Tuesday morning, January 2, 2007. The students also get an extra day off due to the staff having professional development activities on Tuesday; students report back on January 3rd. This year the end of the first semester and semester tests happen after school resumes in January. The first semester ends January 12th.

The days leading up to Christmas break were a whirlwind of activities. There were basketball games, a school play, a band concert, Basketball, Coronation, a choir concert, an elementary Christmas program, the delayed conclusion of the Benton County Tournament, and the high school Multi-Cultural Club's formal, a "Wintery Walk in the Park". That list does not include the various activities respective to each campus nor does it include the daily routines of those schools. All of the events I attended made me proud of our students and staff who work the various programs that have public exposure. Many of our students are gifted in drama, in the performing arts, and in athletics and they are having a chance to use those gifts. We have some dedicated, competent teachers who are providing quality instruction for those students and I salute both the teachers and students for representing our school in a good manner.

There was one night a few short days ago that really made me proud to be a part of this community. One of the school districts' long-time employee's husband had to go to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota because of a serious illness affecting his liver. Some of our teachers had an idea to have an auction at the Coronation basketball game to raise money to help defray some of that family's medical expenses incurred during their seven-week stay at the clinic. Pretty soon many of the teachers at all the campuses and school organizations began putting together some Christmas baskets and other items to auction. Several local businesses donated items for the auction too.

At the game that night there was much good-natured competition as

various bidders raised each other's last bid on some item. Then, at the live auction after the boy's game, the fans from Lincoln became involved along with the Gentry fans and purchased several of the items being auctioned. A local fan and father of one of the girls on the Senior Girls' Basketball team dug deep and out bid everyone for a signed Gentry basketball which he then gave to the daughter, another senior girls' team member, of the man in the hospital. It was a heart warming and touching moment in time.

When this live auction was going on there were no Gentry fans or Lincoln fans, there were only people who wanted to put action to their feeling of compassion for someone who had a need. When the starting buzzer sounded for the girls' game to begin it was back to "Go Pioneers!" and "Go Wolves" as it should have been, but for a time apart everyone in the gym transcended high school athletic rivalry.

Looking back I have thought, "Isn't this what Christmas is about- putting any differences aside and caring for others who have a need? A school district is not a social relief agency; rather it exists to educate students in academic pursuits. But in the midst of algorithms and conjugation of verbs, sometimes an opportunity arises for students to learn the meaning of kindness and compassion for others. Sometimes students need to have the experience of seeing people help other people not just with words but also with deeds. They need to see people, who basically are strangers, help out someone just because it is a good thing to do, an act of kindness with no reward expected.

Many of our school club's take on projects during the school year to help others at various times- Christmas being one of those times. I thank those staff members and volunteers who help our students experience caring for others.

God forbid that our schools turn out students who are sound of mind and intellect but weak in heart and compassion. While the school's mission is learning, there is much learning not to be found in books but in the examples of others.

I wish you a Merry Christmas to your family from mine. May it be a time of family togetherness for you.