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DARE program emphasizes responsibility

Sixth-grade students from Bradley, Eisenhower and MacArthur elementary schools graduated from DARE.

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Sixth-grade students from Bradley, Eisenhower and MacArthur elementary schools graduated Nov. 8 from the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program. Department of the Army Police Officer David Mellott, from the Directorate of Emergency Services, led the 10-week program for the schools on post.

DARE is a comprehensive K-12 education program taught in thousands of schools in America and 52 other countries. It addresses contemporary social issues such as drugs, violence, bullying, internet safety and other high-risk circumstances.

“We teach ways to resolve situations constructively and how to make constructive choices,” Mellott said.

Sixth-grade students wrote essays using hypothetical situations to demonstrate the types of problem-solving skills that were learned during the 10-week program. One essay from each class at each school on post was selected and its student author recognized at the DARE graduation.

Meryn Rodgers and Jamar Oldacre were the top essay winners from among all students of the two-sixth grade classes at Bradley Elementary School. Rodgers, a student of Craig Ericks, received the best overall essay award for her piece, “Punch.” The essay, which Rogers also read during the award ceremony, spoke in a narrative style to the paradigm of causes and consequences based upon actions.

“For us, as teachers, we see students learning the DARE decision-making model. So, it is helping students with problem solving and critical thinking — if we encounter a conflict, how to react appropriately,” said teacher, Katie Conn, Oldacre’s sixth-grade teacher at Bradley Elementary. “Officer Mellott is a wonderful DARE program resource for us. He does a fantastic job empowering our students in just 10 weeks.”

The first lesson of the program discusses responsibility and introduces decision-making. Subsequent lessons apply these skills in increasingly complex ways and range from issues like drug use to other choices in life.

Winning essays were also selected from both Eisenhower and MacArthur elementary schools. Hannah Madden, a sixth grader in Jill Herold’s class at Eisenhower Elementary School, won top essayist honors for her school. Madden’s essay was a recapitulation of the essential skills that she developed during the program.

“DARE is not just another boring school lesson as you can see,” Madden wrote. “It is very useful and it makes decision-making easy. I have already, and plan to use the DARE decision-making model to make good and responsible decisions to any problems, whether they are life changing or not.”

MacArthur Elementary School sixth-grader Katie Goings, a student of Christine Harris, wrote about the importance of communication in her commentary, which was the overall winning essay for her school.

“One of the things I found most important was one of our glossary words, and that word is communication,” Goings wrote. “Communication is important, and you have to make sure you use it correctly, or it could be ignored or taken the wrong way.”

The DARE elementary school curriculum is intended to provide instruction that helps prevent drug use by developing basic skills needed for safe and responsible choices. The curriculum design is based on the Socio-Emotional Learning Theory. It identifies several fundamental basic skills and processes needed for healthy development, such as self-awareness and management, responsible decision making, understanding others, relationship and communication skills, as well as handling responsibilities and challenges.

SEL teaches youth ways in which to control their impulses. The process encourages thought about risks and consequences. The emphasis of instruction and goal of the program is to teach youth how to make safe and responsible decisions that will guide them to healthy life choices.

“DARE is a very important program for our students,” said Ericks. “It teaches students responsibility and how to assess most any given situation, explore various courses of action, then ultimately choose the most appropriate.”



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

Sixth-grader Meryn Rodgers reads her DARE essay, selected as the best at Bradley Elementary School, during DARE graduation Nov. 8 at Bradley. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp