

RENEWAL NEWS

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BIG IMPACT**

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OUR FIRST



Building a culture of caring into the curriculum is at the forefront of an exciting new partnership that created the first We Care School in Shreveport this fall.

University Elementary School is emphasizing a We Care approach to all aspects of education, from the classroom to the lunchroom. The South Shreveport school has some 1,100 students from all types of neighborhoods, but it is working to maintain the feel of a small neighborhood school.

“When we look at education, we ask what is the most important thing we can do for our kids. And that is teach them to care about each other,” said Principal Kasie Mainiero.

“We are building community, just like Community Renewal does. These students will become active residents who care about the place where they live and work. It’s going to be powerful.”

A few days before the school year started, about 120 teachers, staff and administrators joined us on our biggest tour ever. We started at the school and then rode on school buses to the four Shreveport Friendship Houses. Everyone met back at the school for small-group discussion and fellowship.

“The goal is to scale this partnership initiative to all Caddo Schools. The concept is that each school will create its own unique culture of caring as the foundation for learning and community,” said Kim Mitchell, director of the Center for Community Renewal. “If the excitement and engagement at University Elementary are an indication, We Care Schools is what education and this community needs.”

Students are grouped into eight “houses” with names such as Respect, Kindness and Mercy – all in various foreign languages. Each house has student leaders, chosen by their classmates, and they will also decide on service projects. Their efforts will be recognized at the school honors assembly. Another new aspect of life at the school will be the Caught You Caring

cards, in which students recognize their peers on a Caught You Caring card that they drop into a We Care box.

“If you can reach kids at this age, they can apply it in high school and as adults and they can help stop some of the problems we have,” said Zach Bolzan, assistant principal. “We are revamping the idea of what school is for students, teachers and staff. We are reigniting the fire and passion about education. It’s a fresh new start.”

The importance of caring for others will be a central component of all school activities.

“We are like a small city with villages and streets and blocks,” Mainiero said. “Caring will be part of everything we do. The kids will hear that





TO BUILD A CULTURE OF CARING

constantly. We want them to think about that everywhere they are.”

Third-grade teacher Renate Michael has taught at University for almost 20 years and she is as excited about a new school year as she has ever been.

“This is so cool because it brings us together as a school and as a community. Our kids are very diverse and this will bring more understanding and help us find our common ground,” she said.

“Teaching them to care and be kind and be inclusive is as important as reading, writing and arithmetic. This is how we can change our culture.”

Mainiero said elementary schools reach

children at a crucial age when they can more easily learn to appreciate the differences in people because on the inside, we are all basically the same, sharing many of the same dreams for the future.

“People everywhere are longing for positive, caring, relationships. It’s one language we all speak – the language of loving one another. If we can spread this love, I do believe this city will change,” she said.

“I am so glad to be a part of this partnership. We have so much work to do, but it’s the best kind of work, the kind that makes a difference!”



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– Kasie Mainiero, principal



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