

2013 Ceremony Networking Session: Transcript: *Community Connections* (4:39)



Cindy Presnell, Principal, Scott Elementary School, Scott Air Force Base, IL. Cindy Presnell, I am from Mascoutah School district. We are 30 minutes east of St. Louis MO. We have, Susannah and I, have the fortunate opportunity that we have children who are pre-K through [grade] five that live on Scott Air Force Base. And while we are a public school, we do have those Air Force base children. And with that, we have new students entering the building every day. And so when we look at creating a family atmosphere,—they come in with, they're like, "Oh yeah, last week I was in Japan." Yeah, last week I was in Walmart. But with that, they come with all kinds of experiences, but they know that, then, three weeks down the road, that, their best friend in class could be gone. And so the way that we have found to help really promote that family atmosphere, is that our children take on causes. And they create causes in that they go out and find them. This past February our students participated in a jump rope for heart. In a three-week time period of time, they earned \$19,600. They do where, we're reading so many minutes and we have a [whole] building project where they together, collectively, have to read a certain number of minutes. And we celebrate as a building. And with that, we find that they can take pride, and they find that that is something they can hold onto—their achievements, not only in the classroom, but as a collective group throughout the building.

Judy Greer, Assistant Principal, Ellen Smith Elementary School, Conway, AK. I am Judy Greer; I am Assistant Principal at Ellen Smith Elementary School, in Conway, Arkansas. What you've said today, I would really have to say, "Our school does that. Our school does that." And then we've heard some things, "Oh, we need to do that, we need to do that." Well I have two things that we do in our school that have been outstanding, and that is to get our dads involved in our school. It's called the WatchDOGS Dads program. The Dogs stands for Dads of Great Students. We have had this in our school for ten years, and we have dads that volunteer. Sometimes they come a couple of hours in the morning; sometimes at the end of the day, and most of them will volunteer a full day and spend the day with our kids mentoring

and tutoring our kids. And that has made a difference, to have that dad figure to eat lunch with them and to have someone to be out on the playground with them, to play with them. And another thing that we do that has helped our children is we do that “food to backpack to home program.” And every two weeks send a backpack of food home with our kids. We want to make sure that they are getting their meals on the weekends, when they are away from school. Another thing that makes it really interesting is that the food is delivered to a nursing home, a retirement home, in Conway. And those people sack our bags. They do about 70 bags and then they’re delivered to our school and are handed out. To have the community involved with our kids has been outstanding.

Gordon Goodman, Principal, Burwell Elementary School, Burwell, NE. I think some of our strongest things that we have, number one is community. Our community supports us in everything that we need. We’re a thousand member community and we only have 325 or 330 students, K – 12. Our community makes sure we get everything and anything that we need. And another thing is that we have a great staff. We take and we make sure that our staff is in an area that they have their strengths in. We make sure that [we] utilize those strengths so that it builds a stronger, better school. We also have a teammates mentoring program. And we bring in community members to our students, and we match them up personality-wise and they spend one hour a week through the school year with those students. It’s a great program and a great situation for our kids. And a little thing that we do is, to give back to the community is, we always have food drives for the local food bank, to help out. One last thing: We always end our school meetings with our kids by saying, “When you do good things, good things happen.” And this was a great thing