

Students Experience Hands-on Lesson on Citizenship

(Reprint from a story written by Scott Fishman of the Sun-Sentinel)



University School's middle school students were recently given an immersive lesson in what it takes to be good citizens. As part of the second annual Citizenship Day, each grade had a respective focus. Sixth-graders at the Davie school worked on team-building exercises, including a group knot game and a blindfold activity.

Samantha Robbins liked the pole activity, which required 20 or so students working together to keep a pole balanced with their fingers. "It was really hard to do," she said. "But once we figured out who the leaders in our group were, like leaders in our community, they helped us all work together, and we completed the activity."

Seventh-graders worked on activities exemplifying good citizenship in cyberspace, as well as gaining insight on cyber-bullying and strategies to help them stay safe online. Eric Ackerman, dean of Nova Southeastern University's graduate school of computer and information sciences, covered these topics during a presentation. "I have actually already done some of the tips he gave, but there are still some settings I need to change on some of my social networks so I'm safer in the long run," said student Asher Jurman.

Classmate Sarah Bell agreed. "It helped me understand that there are so many things you shouldn't do on social networks," she said. "I'm planning on giving my parents all my social networking log-in info and placing a sticky note over my camera."

Eighth-graders learned about good citizenship in the wider community by going out and volunteering. They volunteered at a cooperative feeding program, with beach cleanups, facilities for underprivileged and autistic children, and more.

Ava La Tona enjoyed making holiday cards that will go into Thanksgiving baskets for families in need. "This helped me realize how lucky I am to be so fortunate to have everything I have when some children don't even have food to eat or a roof over their heads," she said.

Stephen Marten, associate director, said it's important to promote good character development in students. "I think the students in all grades enjoyed their experiences because they not only learned a lot about what they can do on their own to become a good citizen, in our school and online, but also ways they can help others in the community through charities, food drives, beach cleanups, etc.," he said.