

Peter – Venture Youth Alliance Community blueprint release celebration

Bluestem/Trollwood, Moorhead, MN

801 50th Ave SW (South past Safari on 8th Street to 50th Ave. S., turn right on 50th St.)

Tuesday, August 14, 2012

2:30-3:30 pm

Karen Olson 701-388-0637

Good afternoon. Thank you for being here today and for inviting me to speak. I appreciate all that Venture Youth Alliance is doing to help our community use our resources to help kids become successful! I'm excited to see how the new blueprint impacts the lives of kids who don't always know who cares or who will push them to believe in themselves. I want to share with you today a few thoughts I have about relationships. Did you know according to Bill Milliken, a positive, one to one relationship with a caring adult is the most important factor in keeping teenagers in school? It's true, we need you even if we say we don't.

I would like you to now turn to a person next to you and tell them about the most important relationship in your life. Go ahead..... (INTERRUPT THEM AND WAIT FOR THEIR ATTENTION.)

What are relationships? Are they something you learn how to do, or something you should just know about when you are born? Well I'm here today to tell you that relationships are really important and we need to keep working to learn how to get along with all kinds of people. I want to tell you about my first encounter with the word relationship.

When I was about 6 years old I was just so excited to go to kindergarten, but I was a really quiet kid. My parents came to the U.S. as refugees from Haiti because of war issues. For the safety of my family, my parents decided to come to the U.S. I was their second child entering kindergarten. Only knowing how to speak Creole which is a language mixed with some French, made it tough for me. Even though I was born here in the U.S., it was difficult and scary to start school.

My parents always told me that, if I wanted to have friends I would have to be willing to go out and try to talk with other kids that I barely knew. Not knowing much English or how to communicate with others made me feel terrified! I had to learn how to do this.

So a day before I had my first day of school, I sat in my room for hours practicing in the mirror how to greet someone. A couple of sayings I practiced that I will never forget for the rest of my life are, “ Hi! My name is Peter, what is your name? or “Hi nice to meet you.”

To many other people those phrases may seem like the dumbest or easiest sayings in the world to say, but not for me. Practicing these made me feel good. I felt like I was ready to go to school. I was certain that I would have the most friends and everybody would like me.

So, that night, I laid out my newest clothes or “coolest” you could say, and practiced and practiced with a huge smile on my face. I then went to sleep.

The next morning came and boy was I excited! I was the first one up, first one to brush my teeth and take a shower. I felt like I was the man! I got dressed, combed my hair, the little that I had, and went to my parent’s bedroom to wake them up. Little did I know that it was 5:30 a.m. and I didn’t start school until 8:45. So I sat around and waited for my parents to drive me to school. We lived only two blocks away! My parents drove me to school until I was in 3rd grade because they thought I would get lost.

I got to school, found my locker with a big golden star that said, “Peter” and then went into my classroom. As soon as I got there I was shocked. I didn’t see anyone but the teacher. I walked up to her and said what I practiced the night before, “Hi! My name is Peter.” And the teacher replied loudly, “Hiiiiiiii Peeettterrrr.... My name is Mrs. Schwise. You’re here a bit early, the bell doesn’t ring for another 20 minutes.”

My teacher showed me to my desk and I sat there until the next student walked through the door. I got up and stood right by the door and greeted every student that came through the door with, "Hi! My name is Peter. What is your name?"

Before I knew it, I had memorized everybody's name in my whole class. Even the teacher came up to me and said, "You know Peter you are the most polite kid I have ever met and a couple of kids are learning from you."

Since that day, I learned that if you greet someone with a warm welcome and a smile, others will follow.

Building those relationships with my classmates, helps me understand today that the first encounter with someone you meet, might determine what kind of relationship you will have in the future. So, remember, having great relationships with one another might start with a simple handshake and a warm smile. This will not only benefit you for those couple of seconds, but it will also help you grow and become a better person later on in life. As a young boy and now today, I have learned from my parents that relationships require work and are worth more than any amount of money.

In closing, I want to thank you for listening to me and I want to encourage you to go and build relationships with others, especially kids.