Publications Excellence in Writing Category: A Bench for Kenzie
Writing Link: https://issuu.com/dysartusd/docs/community_connect_volume_3_issue_2_-_web/s/15276438
Full Magazine Link: https://issuu.com/dysartusd/docs/community_connect_volume_3_issue_2_-_web/1

PURPOSE: The Public Relations and Communications produces the Community Connect magazine in the Fall and Spring of each school year. We actively seek uplifting and impactful stories to share with the community. Western Peaks Elementary School posted on Twitter about a bench dedication in October 2021. We reached out to Principal, Stacie Brown to learn more about the story and student behind the dedication. Mrs. Brown shared that the bench was dedicated to Mackenzie (Kenzie) Hancock, a student that sadly passed away of brain cancer in February 2020. After speaking to Kenzie’s classmates and parents, we learned about the impact she had on everyone around her and specifically about the Buddy Bench efforts she supported when she was at school. The Buddy Bench concept is simple: if a child feels lonely, they can go to the bench as a signal that they need someone to play with. Another child will see them, go and talk to them and include them. Kenzie loved the idea as she was shy and sometimes making friends was a challenge. She was instrumental in raising funds for the Buddy Bench at Western Peaks. The fact that there was a way to silently ask for a friend was what she loved about the bench the most. When Kenzie’s parents wanted to do a remembrance for Kenzie at the school, they thought a Buddy Bench outside of the front office would be a perfect way to honor her.

WHERE/WHEN IT’S BEING USED: With one of the largest circulation in the Northwest Valley, the Community Connect magazine was mailed to approximately 90,000 households and businesses in Surprise, El Mirage, Youngtown and Maricopa boundaries during the Spring of 2022. Additionally, the magazine was posted on the district website and articles were disseminated to the community on social media pages through Issuu.

TARGET AUDIENCE: The target audience is all stakeholders in the Dysart community including parents, students, community members and staff. The variety of articles and topics developed for the magazine were meant to appeal to the wider community and also to share stories such as Kenzie’s and show the care and compassion she had for others and the impact she had on her friends, family, and the Western Peaks Elementary School community.

HOW IT’S SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: The Community Connect magazine supports effective communication by providing a positive publication featuring impactful stories from students, parents, teachers, volunteers and community members. The magazine is meant to engage the community in our schools who would not otherwise have a connection with Dysart.

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED: The Community Connect magazine has a print circulation of approximately 90,000 households and businesses, including parts of Surprise, El Mirage, Glendale, Youngtown, and Maricopa County...
boundaries. A Bench for Kenzie ran in the Spring 2022 issue. We had several community members reach out
directly and share how much they enjoyed reading the magazine, how they related to the articles, and
specifically how A Bench for Kenzie touched their hearts. Additionally, the online editions receive more than
1,000 impressions.