

Quentin recognized as 'model' school

Anti-violence campaign founder thanks pupils

Sara Bisker: staff writer

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Stupid. Dumb. Idiot.

These words and more are being eliminated from Quentin Elementary School pupils' vocabulary.

"It's never OK to be hurt by words or actions," said Ann Kelly, founder of the Hands & Words Are Not for Hurting Project. She visited the Avondale school on Tuesday to thank pupils for supporting the anti-violence campaign.

"Quentin, absolutely, is a model," Kelly said.

Pupils recite the pledge every day, sometimes twice a day, school counselor Vangie Lampee said. In March, each pupil was asked to share the pledge with family and community members in exchange for \$1, which went toward a fund to buy a T-shirt emblazoned with the campaign's trademark purple hand and red heart for every pupil.

"I will not use my hands or my words for hurting myself or others," the 14-word pledge is simple, but powerful, Kelly said.

Teaching children through repetition will instill healthy values for a lifetime, she said.

As the wife of an emergency physician in Salem, Ore., Kelly said she saw a rise in violence. She also holds a master's degree in violence prevention and has worked as a self-defense instructor.

Bridging the gap between identifying a problem and finding a solution was difficult, she said.

"What do we do to turn it around and how could a very young child understand? I could see [the problem] but didn't know how. These people are the how," she said, referring to the mass of pupils surrounding her in the Quentin cafeteria.

She took the pledge to schools in Oregon, where Lampee was completing an internship as part of her master's degree program in counseling from Oregon State University.

When Lampee learned Quentin Elementary didn't have an anti-bully/anti-violence program, she turned to the Hands Project for guidance.

Now, pupils begin each day with the pledge and use it throughout the day to remind themselves to keep a cool mind and a warm heart.

"We each get angry and mad. We know everyone fights, but we have to take this pledge together," Kelly said.

"There's always a choice."

Avondale Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers took the pledge and told pupils the city makes pledges every day to keep the city safe and the residents protected.

"It hurts your family and everyone around you when you don't listen to the Hands Project," she said. "There are 70,000 people in the city of Avondale. Imagine if they all stopped hurting each other. We'd be the safest city ever."

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