SERVICE ABOVE SELF SCHOOL PROGRAM

It is the underlining tenet of The Service Above Self School Program to honor and recognize schools that involve all students in service activities, and emphasizing compassion and understanding of others as educational objectives.

It is the general practice in this country, as well as in most others, to look primarily, if not entirely, at academic factors when selecting superior elementary, middle and secondary schools. Awards and rankings of “top” schools almost exclusively focus on standardized test results.

By honoring and recognizing elementary, as well as middle and secondary schools that conduct model service programs, a clear statement is made that the quality of life as we know it will be improved to the extent we are able to see, appreciate and meet the need for compassion and understanding among people of diverse backgrounds.

Numerous studies have concluded that there is a clear relationship between the involvement of children and youth in service activities and their likelihood of being committed to humanitarian needs as adults. Also, it has been found that youth who volunteer for community work are more likely to do better in school and have a higher sense of reverence for life and be more altruistic than those less engaged in service activities.

Educators have reported that the past several decades have witnessed a growing counter-productive self-image among school-age children. It is not uncommon for children and their parents to associate the worth of individuals with the amount of praise and external rewards they receive. To counter this self-serving philosophy we need to help our younger generations see the interconnectedness and interdependence of life. Involvement in service activities will help children realize a more meaningful purpose of the living experience. Many schools - public and private - are placing greater emphasis on citizenship and character education in an attempt to help students develop a sense of connection with others. Some of these schools have created service programs and/or are requiring students to complete a specific number of service hours to graduate. By recognizing schools that have superior service programs, not only will their efforts be reinforced within their own school community but other schools will be encouraged to follow their example.

With over 34,000 clubs world-wide and more than 1.2 million members, Rotary International is one of the few organizations capable of supporting a global program of this nature and magnitude. Rotary International is respected worldwide for its commitment to humanitarian services and its numerous programs created to benefit youth. In 1949, the Rotary International Board adopted the slogan “Every Rotarian Example to Youth.” Rotary clubs throughout the world recognize individual students and student organizations that adhere to the general principles of the Four-Way Test. Interact Clubs, in particular, will have an opportunity to play a key role in involving their total school population in service programs.

The Service Above Self School Program was started because of a clear need to give recognition not only to schools that excel academically but also those with a major commitment to involve ALL student in service activities. Nationwide, approx. 10% of students are involved in service clubs and generally come from homes in which there are role models who teach the importance of giving and helping others. This program is designed to include ALL students.

(You may reprint any or all of the above as part of your information package)

Since establishing the program during the last school year, five out of the thirteen Warren County Tn. schools have been recognized and presented with their award plaque.

I am available to answer any questions you may have. Do not hesitate to contact me at [billhovenden@att.net](mailto:billhovenden@att.net), or telephone 615-452-4569.