



Kenai Peninsula Borough School District - Golden Apple Award | May 3, 2021

Mrs. Wendy Bryden

Seven years ago when her two sons were enrolled at Moose Pass School, Mrs. Wendy Bryden started a LEGO Robotics program. Despite the fact that her sons have grown and moved on to middle school and high school in Seward, she kept the program going. "She shares her passion and enthusiasm for this wonderful program with students in grades K-8, volunteering hours of her time to work during lunch, afterschool, weekends, and even during winter break activities," said nominator Susanna LaRock.

Mrs. Bryden feels that it is important for students to learn all aspects of the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) LEGO League program (FLL). She teaches students that it is not just about LEGOs or robots or winning competitions. Students learn about the Core Values of the program through Core Value exercises at the start of every meeting and her consistent inclusion of the values in her teachings.

There are six FLL Core Values, and Wendy so successfully imparts them to the students at Moose Pass School, that the FLL team won the Core Values award in Anchorage, Alaska, at their last competition. The Core Values are:

- Discovery: We explore new skills and ideas
- Innovation: We use creativity and persistence to solve problems
- Impact: We apply what we learn to improve our world
- Inclusion: We respect one another and embrace our differences
- Teamwork: We are stronger when we work together
- Fun: We enjoy and celebrate what we do

Students at Moose Pass School learn about innovative problem solving through her passion for the whole FIRST LEGO League program. Each year, through the program, she presents students with a real world problem, invests time to listen as they come up with solutions, supports them to find ways to implement their solutions, and determines which work best. She helps the students find ways to share what they are learning with the community.

"In 2020, students worked on a problem of an overabundance of biting insects in their community. Their solution was to raise awareness about the importance of bats in our community and to build bat houses to put around the community to support bat habitat," said Ms. LaRock. "Mrs. Bryden connected students with a retired forestry worker who talked with them about bats. She spent time hiking with the students around the community looking for bats, and she connected the students with a local construction company who sponsored the team and helped them learn how to build bat houses."

All of the students at Moose Pass School who have participated in Mrs. Bryden's program understand the terms Gracious Professionalism and Coopertition (a term coined by FLL). Coopertition is the idea that the students teach teammates and learn from teammates. They learn from mentors. They are managing and being managed. She encourages students to learn and compete while treating others with respect and kindness. She makes sure that there is an emphasis on the integrity of the students in all of the activities. When a fifth grade student at Moose Pass School was asked if he thought his team could win the competition, his reply was, "It is not just about winning, gracious professionalism and coopertition are very important, and we can get points from helping other teams." Mrs. Bryden was so proud to hear his comment because she knew that student to be a person with a fiercely competitive nature, and was happy to know that he had really learned about coopertition.

This student had learned one of the things that Mrs. Bryden hopes to impart to all of the students: the best way to be successful is to compete while assisting and enabling others to be successful as well.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Board of Education is proud to recognize Mrs. Wendy Bryden for her dedication to the students of the school district, past, present, and future.