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'BIG KID' TRAINING

Wed, 10/19/2016 - 8:33pm Palatka1

Mellon Elementary fourth- and fifth-graders receive mentoring from Universty of North Florida students

BY: ASIA AIKINS
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A group of students at Palatka's Mellon Elementary School are spending the first semester preparing to be "really good as big kids" through a new virtual mentoring program.

The University of North Florida is partnering with Mellon this year to offer C.A.M.P. Osprey, a collegiate achievement mentoring program based out of the college's Jacksonville campus and conducted at Mellon via video call each week.

According to Jennifer Rivera, Northeast Florida Education Consortium supervisor of curriculum and instruction, UNF professor Matthew Ohlson contacted the consortium hoping to connect with a school south of Duval County.

VIDEO SPOTLIGHT

Spotting Vehicle Probl...



Palatka, FL 32177

Weather

75.2 °F

Mostly Sunny

NNE Wind
8.1mph

50 °F 79 °F

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|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 63 79 | 64 80 | 63 79 | 61 82 |
| TUE | WED | THU | FRI |

12:59 PM Mon Oct 24

WillyWeather

"Mellon is my old home," Rivera said. "I immediately thought of Mellon when he asked, and I'm very excited to have the program here."

Ohlson created the initiative at UNF, which pairs college students with public school students to develop leadership skills and college-readiness skill development.

The program, Mellon Principal Joe Theobald said, teaches students character traits and skills that could help them overcome challenges on the road to college and the workforce.

"We identified 10 students who have a lot of things going for them, but maybe didn't have the idea of going to college," Theobald said. "We thought we would hook them up with that."

On Tuesday, in the third week of Camp Osprey, the 10 fourth- and fifth-graders met with six UNF students via video call to discuss proactive and reactive reactions during different scenarios. Each Mellon and UNF student is equipped with a workbook to guide the discussion and related activities.

"About 1,000 times a day, we get to choose how to respond to different situations," a UNF student read from the workbook.

Mellon students shared ideas about staying positive and proactive despite potentially confrontational situations, such as someone copying during a test, placing false blame or being physically aggressive.

Some of the Mellon students' responses were the same as the UNF students' responses.

"I like talking to the older kids," fourth-grader Tatianah Gardner said of the UNF students. "They understand."

"We can have a little fun with them," fifth-grader Matthew Simmons said.

Simmons said he also likes to learn about college from the UNF students during the video calls.

Both Mellon students said they are looking forward to the culmination of C.A.M.P. Osprey in December, when they travel to the UNF campus in Jacksonville and get to meet their video mentors face-to-face.

Tatianah, who aspires to be a home health aide, said she's learned a lot from her mentors already.

"I think we're going to be really good as big kids," she said.

When C.A.M.P. Osprey began, Theobald said, the culture at Mellon Elementary began to change.

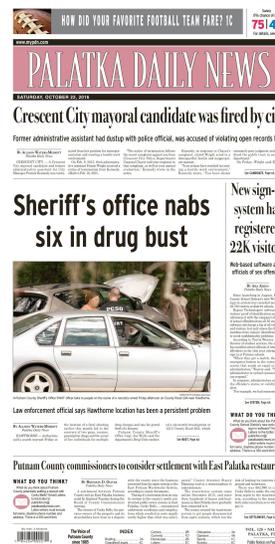
"The students started carrying a different demeanor since Day One," Theobald said. "And the buzz outside the program has begun to change other students. They want to know how to get involved."

Next semester, Theobald hopes to expand C.A.M.P. Osprey to include 20 students. He said there are about 80 students in the fourth and fifth grades at Mellon, and 30 of those students would be affected by the program by the end of the year.

"A change in culture is slow," Theobald said. "There's definitely been a boost."

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POLL

Do you think the city of Palatka should allow Sunday morning alcohol sales?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- I don't care

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Older polls
Results

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Palatka Daily News

October 18 at 9:35pm

We had a standing-room only crowd tonight at the Palatka Daily News Political Forum, which featured Putnam County sheriff and schools superintendent candidates. Thank you to all who attended, including candidates and supporters. A big thanks to St. Johns River State College for allowing us to host the forum in Valhalla Hall. Look for coverage of the forum in tomorrow's Palatka Daily News and plenty of election coverage

PALATKA DAILY NEWS

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