

Fifth-grader receives trophy for quiz bowl triumph

By Mike Ellis

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ANDERSON — Academic celebrations can be as good as athletic ones, especially when students get to miss class for a scholarly pat on the back.

About a dozen students at New Prospect Elementary School got to miss class for about a half-hour Monday while fifth-grade student Niklas Koch, 10, was given a trophy for winning a social studies quiz bowl in January.

The students participated in an Academic Quiz Bowl on Martin Luther King Jr. Day at Clemson University, where about 70 third- to fifth-graders from the Upstate and as far away as Columbia went head to head.

Niklas emerged with the most correct answers.

As part of his reward, Niklas was filmed and broadcast to the entire school while accepting his trophy, an etched-glass award engraved with “Most Outstanding Student” and Niklas’ name.

The trophy was picked because it is something kids would be proud to keep and not some small trinket they would forget about or not even bother to try getting, said Winston Holton, director of Clemson University’s Call Me MISTER program, which hosted the quiz bowl.

Holton compared the quiz bowl to athletic competitions.

“No one has a hard time getting recognized athletically,” Holton said. “There are rewards from learning; this is something nice. It’s both a challenge to the kids and a reward.”

Holton said students can get interested in education for the competition and learn skills they can use later.

“The students came back drilling each other with the (quiz bowl) questions,” said Nancy Hanley, instructional facilitator at New Prospect Elementary. “I’d hear them in the halls. They shared the questions with their teachers, everyone.”

The questions focused on history, economics and government but the few current events and sports questions that were thrown in were probably the most-remembered ones, Hanley said.

Niklas' parents, Ralf and Diana Koch, said that they do not really have to push Niklas to study. He does it on his own.

"Especially the wars," Diana Koch said, referring to World War I and World War II.

"Kids like Niklas are self-motivated," said Stan Cowen, social studies and foreign languages coordinator for Anderson School District 5.

Call Me MISTER (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) is a leadership program for teachers that was founded at Clemson. The program tries to place teachers from diverse cultures and backgrounds in educationally at-risk classrooms.

"It's a great program," said Jason Glover, a senior in the Call Me MISTER program at Clemson. "It's great for my future career. I get to go schools' after-school programs. I go to Gettis in Easley."

Holton said social studies was picked as the focus of the quiz bowl because it matched with the Martin Luther King Jr. service day and with Call Me MISTER's focus on history, diversity and civil rights.

"People with social studies skills make better people after school," Cowen said. "Better voters, better citizens and more informed people."



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