

## **Volunteerism – Receiving Through Giving**

By Principal Bill Marineau

As a child, I was told a story by an elderly Russian immigrant that still resonates within me today. “One day an old woman sat in her rocking chair on the porch of her small neighborhood home. A young boy walked slowly by with his head hunched over, looking as if he was carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. The woman invited the boy onto her porch and asked what was troubling him. He said that he was very unhappy and felt sad. She empathized with him and reflected that she too had felt that way at times when she was young.

The elderly woman looked deep into the boy’s eyes and told him she had a secret that would help him feel better. He was curious and inquired about the secret. She responded that she could only tell him if he was willing to do three good deeds for others without expecting anything in return. The boy agreed and went to do as he was asked. A few days later he returned with a little bounce in his step. Looking brighter, with shoulders held high, the boy told the elderly woman about his good deeds. He then asked her what her secret was on how to be happy. She confidently replied, ‘You receive through giving. I hope you will remember this all of your days’.”

Giving to others by volunteering is truly receiving through giving. At West Park Elementary we are fortunate to have an extensive volunteer corps representing all aspects of our Moscow community. Business professionals, student living groups, athletes from the University of Idaho, retired patrons, parents and other individuals make up our diverse group of volunteers. These dedicated people come week after week to form bonds of learning with our students, helping them to read, working on math skills, or enhancing social proficiencies.

West Park students and staffs are also involved in receiving through giving. Daily efforts as well as special projects enable the West Park community to experience the benefits of volunteering. A few examples of these efforts are: volunteering to clean up litter, helping each other in big brother/sister programs, giving books to needy children and raising money for a myriad of causes throughout the year. These efforts assist our community members in closing the circle of giving.

The dedicated volunteers at West Park Elementary have recently been recognized for their outstanding volunteer work in the State of Idaho. Americorps VISTA Volunteer Coordinator Susan Steele and I were honored to accept the Governor’s “Brightest Star Award” for 2008, on March 27 in Boise. This award represents all the volunteer efforts that West Park Elementary and the community have provided while helping students to be successful. During the fall semester of 2007, 180 volunteers logged more than 1550 hours of volunteer time to read with individual students or small groups, work on the playground to help teach fair play, and a myriad of other efforts. These impressive hours have been duplicated year after year.