

Principal says show others you care

“When students are supportive of each other and the school as a whole, we all benefit because it’s more of a team approach instead of one person managing something,” said Ms. Anna Jenkins, Adaire principal, in a recent interview with *Fit Fish* reporters.

Empathy is being able to understand how other people are feeling, according to the Oxford Learner’s Dictionary. Showing empathy to others can help them feel included and give them a sense of belonging, says Harvard University’s Making Caring Common Project. This sense of belonging can help manage stress, notes the Mayo Clinic, a hospital and research center.

Principal Jenkins answered questions about empathy at Adaire. Her answers are lightly edited.

Q: In your experience, what are the benefits of showing empathy to other people?

Principal Jenkins: I think it helps people to feel seen and heard. It helps me build relationships. It’s kind. It shows that I care. The person receives benefits, and the relationship is built through empathy.

Q: What does our school do to help kids learn how to show empathy?

Principal Jenkins: Our PBIS norms are Caring, Accountable, and Safe. So it’s a choice to be caring. Safety obviously connects to the caring. We have com-

*(Please see **Empathy** on Page 2)*

Kids gain skills in group activities

Joining in group activities can impact kids’ mental and physical health and social skills, according to recent interviews that some Adaire staff members had with *Fit Fish* reporters. “Doing group activities helps you meet new people and strengthen your friendships with people you might not be too close to,” said Mr. Price, dean of Adaire Elementary School.

Group activities are more than just fun and games, experts say. You can have a social connection to someone else, which gives you a sense of belonging, according to the Mayo Clinic, a hospital and research center. This sense of belonging can help you manage stress and make you feel that you’re not alone, the clinic says.

Playing on a team sport can make you stronger because it’s a good source of exercise, according to KidsHealth.org, a website for children’s health. “Kids get to improve their skills and feel that team spirit as they work together toward a common goal,” the website said.

“It’s good to get involved and hear other people’s point of view,” said Mr. Price. He said he is a part of a parent association for his son’s school and is a base-



Illustration by Naya Haddad

ball and football coach in Fishtown. He grew up playing all the sports he could possibly play.

“I loved sports as a kid and I still do now,” said Mr. Price. He said sports taught him how to work

*(Please see **Connect** on Page 3)*

In my words ...

Why it's good to be empathetic

Empathy is important because if someone is upset you can be empathetic with them. Say your friend is upset because their cat died, you can comfort them by putting yourself in their shoes.

What I mean by that is, you can imagine being in their place by imagining that your cat died. That would make you upset too. And that's a way you can be empathetic.

Being empathetic is showing others that you care for them by comforting them in hard or upsetting situations. While their situation may not affect you in certain ways, it could be a tough time for

them, and by showing empathy and caring for them, you may be able to help them feel a lot better.

Being empathetic toward others can have really good benefits like having a stronger relationship, improved communication, and better conflict resolution, according to Harvard University's Making Caring Common Project.

Having empathy skills can really help you in conflicts or hard situations, and not just the person you are showing empathy toward.

—By Sophia Fleming



Illustration by a Fit Fish reporter

Empathy can help others feel seen

(Continued from Page 1)

munity meetings so that if there are topics, if someone is going through something—as a class, as a school, as a country—there's a safe space to talk about things. When you have feelings, it can be very lonely, but hearing other people having the same feelings, it helps.

Q: Why is it hard for some kids to show empathy?

Principal Jenkins: I think it's hard because maybe you're distracted or preoccupied, and you're focusing on yourself and you're insecure or afraid to say the wrong thing, so they say nothing. And if you don't have experience in something, you may not understand how that person is feeling. If there was a student who had a loss of a pet or a family member and you haven't had that experience, you're not sure what to say. If you have that experience, you might know what to say or do. You're all growing up, and this is part of the learning process, so you'll be more empathetic adults one day.

Q: How do you show empathy to others?

Principal Jenkins: I've had to slow down to listen to what people are saying and kind of give them space. I think it's effective because people appreciate it when you do it. You see them as more than just an

employee, a student, or a parent. You see them as another human being that you care to support.

Q: What goals do you have for encouraging empathetic behavior in our school?

Principal Jenkins: That we would all treat each other with respect, we wouldn't be focused just on ourselves, or selfish, that we would make decisions together. One example is student government made a decision on wearing costumes. It's a decision they made as a student body, and they communicated it to all of you, so it was a shared process. We want students to be a part of what we do at Adaire. My goal would be that increased participation so that we are all working together to be kind to each other and think about what programming to do here and what we want Adaire to be like every day.

Q: Please tell us about a specific time when someone showed empathy toward you.

Principal Jenkins: Ms. McGinniss, school-based teacher leader, will give me a hug if she sees that I am upset. It's comforting. She can't change anything, but I feel seen and heard. Teachers do that too. Even when students say, "Hey how are you?" back to me, I thank them for asking because I'm not invisible, it's nice to feel seen.

Reporter's notebook

Farm trip makes memories

Adaire sixth and seventh graders took a trip to Fox Chase Farm in Philadelphia in October. Fox Chase Farm is an educational livestock farm run by the School District of Philadelphia. A livestock farm is a farm that raises animals, according to Britannica.com.

They have lots of animals, such as chickens, cows, goats, and also a pig. Several students from another school were caring for rabbits on the farm when we visited. As part of the trip, students got to make apple cider using fresh apples.

My favorite part of the field trip was when our class went to a donkey pen with two donkeys, chewing on hay. We all gathered around to watch them. After some time, they came up to us because they wanted attention, so we stuck our hands in, and they

let us pet them and scratch the top of their heads.

They clearly enjoyed themselves as they approached and more people crowded to pet them. One came right up to me and let me pet its head and back. They were well-groomed with smooth fur, but the softest part was their big ears. Their ears were very velvety as the fur was thick. Overall, the experience was fun for both of us, and it was very hard to say goodbye.

I would recommend this field trip to all ages of students in the school district because my classmates and I had a great time as we connected, finding something in common in the enjoyment of petting farm animals.

—By Isidora Parra

Connect with others in activities

(Continued from Page 1)

with other people and cooperate. “After all, you can’t do everything yourself,” he said.

Mr. Crosby, substitute teacher, said he participates in a running club inside school and one outside of school. According to Mr. Crosby, it helps him make new friends and get to know them better. He recommends people join a running club and other activities because they give you the skills of teamwork, working with others, and because they’re fun. In high school, Mr. Crosby said he also did drama, which helped him develop his skills.

Mr. Frangipani, school counselor, said that when he was in school, he joined a video club where he learned to do media and recorded sports games at his school. He also joined a [what kind of] team that taught him how to connect with his partners and teammates.

He said it’s important to try new things because you never know if you’ll like it or be good at it unless you try it. Some kids at Adaire were begging for chess so he started a chess club, both for them and for kids to try something new, Mr. Frangipani said. He also said he would definitely recommend chess because you can learn incredible thinking skills.

—By *Fit Fish* reporters

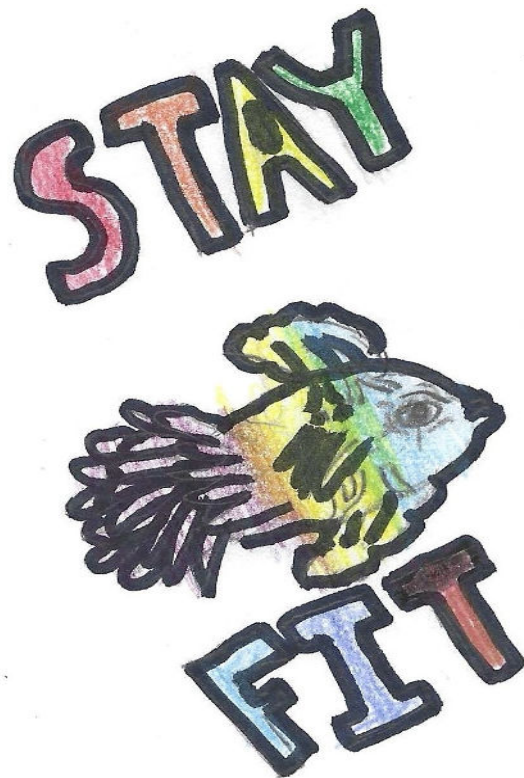


Illustration by a *Fit Fish* reporter

Book is a window into past disease

Fever 1793

By Laurie Halse Anderson

This novel is about a 14-year-old girl named Mattie Cook, who runs a coffee shop with her family in the year 1793. But as summer comes and Philadelphia gets hotter, a disease called yellow fever spreads along the side of the river, but no one thinks much of it yet. Soon, Mattie is forced to grow up quickly and escape the city with her grandfather. She faces the loss of family members and the responsibility of caring for the sick.

Yellow fever is a virus carried by mosquitos that causes fever and if not treated properly, liver failure and death, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Philadelphia had a terrible yellow fever epidemic in 1793. In the year 2025, people can get a vaccine that can prevent infection, but there are still some places in the world where people become sick with yellow fever.

My opinion of this novel is that the book is 50 percent good and 50 percent iffy. Personally, I loved it because it included a young girl who was forced to grow up too soon, due to a tragedy which was very

interesting to read about. However, it was also very hard to read the description of what yellow fever had done to the people. It almost horrified me at how horrible this time was. But since Mattie (the main character) had hope during the hardest times, it helped her get through this tragedy, including 5,000 deaths of people in the Philadelphia area, along with some of her family members. So I did like the book itself, but it scared me a little, considering this was a historical fiction novel.

I suggest this novel for people 11 and up, because of how harsh the content is. I definitely suggest it because after reading, I am much more grateful for the “normal” things I have, which are simple things like water, food, hand sanitizer, and masks. I think the book could have this impact on others. After reading the book, I also feel I take care to be cleaner, like washing my hands more often and using a mask if I am going into a crowded place. In general, it is an incredibly interesting book, because it gives you a glance at what things were like in the seventeenth century, and shows that if you have hope, you can get through nearly anything.

—Reviewed by Stella Musto

Send the *Fit Fish* your feedback

The *Fit Fish* sixth-grade reporters this school year will be exploring why getting involved in activities with other people is a good thing for people’s emotional and physical health.

Being connected to other humans can help reduce stress, lead to healthy eating habits, and increase fitness, according to health experts. Connections can be made through joining teams, gardening, doing art-work together, and belonging to a club—and many other positive activities.

The *Fit Fish* staff wants to hear from you. Send an email or letter with your feedback to Ms. Olavage.

Alexander Adaire Fit Fish

A publication of Alexander Adaire Elementary School in the School District of Philadelphia. Sixth-grade reporters include Lena Avellino, Daniel Beca, Joey Beck, Harlan Brand, Skylar Calarco, Cecelia Crowe, Wesley Durian, Mina Edwards, Sophia Fleming, Isabella Giacobbe, Loren Grant, Naya Haddad, Cecelia McGuigan, Kaiden Miller, Vivienne Murray, Stella Musto, Pike Nicholas, Isidora Parra, Nicholas Pike, Roman Remick, Elliott Rong, Elliot Shall, Charlize Thiede, Benjamin Watcher, Juniper Wells, and Makenna Wood.

The *Fit Fish*’s faculty advisor is Ms. Olavage. Ms. Jenkins is the school principal.

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Illustration by Roman Remick and a *Fit Fish* reporter

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