

De Pere class unlike any other in the nation

By Jeff Alexander | Posted: Thu 3:16 PM, Mar 01, 2018 | Updated: Thu 5:25 PM, Mar 01, 2018

DE PERE, Wis. (WBAY) - Kerri Herrild's personal finance class at De Pere High School goes far beyond saving, borrowing and learning how to write checks.



It's a first-of-its-kind classroom lesson where students are learning to give in a meaningful way.

"Philanthropy is a passion of mine. I've been the benefactor of a lot of philanthropy over the years," says Herrild. "I have Multiple Sclerosis."

Last summer, Herrild joined other teachers in California for a training session sponsored by Next Gen Personal Finance, a non-profit dedicated to free financial education for students.

It was there Herrild shared her dream of teaching philanthropy.

"And I brought this up, I said this is something I've wanted to teach for years, but I don't know how," recalls Herrild.

In Los Angeles, Herrild discovered Next Gen had just designed a curriculum for philanthropy, and with the help of an anonymous donor she launched "The Giving Project" in her classroom.

It's a hit with students.

"With everything that's going on in the world I feel like giving is the number one way to come together," says senior Solomon Breecher.

The process begins with Herrild teaching students what philanthropy means.

Students then pick a cause important to them and research which charity offers the most impact.

"Mine is the Wisconsin Humane Society. All my life, animals have played a big role in my life, so support them and getting them the help they need, shelter, food, all the necessities is really important to me," says senior Kate Koenig.

Students then create a promotion, like a Powerpoint presentation, brochure or video, and share it with family and friends to raise money, which is matched by the donor.

A lifelong connection to giving is established.

"Going to become a big part of you, because if you're in math and you're not really excited to be there, but with this you're helping people and you're helping yourself, so I think it's something that's really cool that will carry through our whole life," says junior Alexandra Westphal.

Herrild's goal is to take this first-of-its-kind program nationwide.

"Let's get high school classrooms all over the country partnering with local philanthropists. They obviously believe in giving back, we as teachers believe in giving back, that's part of our job, so let's partner this up and really have a lasting impact on these students," says Herrild.

During the fall semester, students in Mrs. Herrild's class raised nearly \$6,000 benefiting 49 different charities.

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