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Mark Twain Installs Chicken Coop with Grant Funds

SEPTEMBER 28TH 2022 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Mark Twain School incorporated a chicken coop into its non-traditional learning environment on Friday, Sept. 23, for students to work in shifts and tend after.

“We’re expanding our alternative way of learning,” explained Darla Nunn, Jobs for America’s Graduates specialist.

The prefabricated kit was the first of a series of project-based learning activities that the campus was able to pursue with the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds, of which Missouri Gov. Mike Parson allocated \$12,825 toward Poplar Bluff’s JAG program at the end of last school year.

A group of JAG students assembled the structure under Nunn’s supervision, and placed it beneath a canopy next to a tree in the outdoor recreation area. The goal is to introduce a rooster and two hens to the enclosure this week, with contributions from farmers.

“We’re open to any possibility of potential learning, from operating power tools to following instructions – these are life skills,” Nunn continued. “It’s not just about chickens; we’re building those relationships with kids, and it’s a process.”

Nunn hopes to one day have eggs for the school community to enjoy “theoretically,” she says. She also may look to acquire an incubator to teach a unit on embryology. “Maybe some kids will be excited to come to school just to take care of our chickens,” she commented.

Mark Twain Principal Aaron Burton added: “They’re putting connections together about caring for an animal that is gonna provide eggs that maybe we can share.” If a single student can apply the knowledge outside of school, he said, he will consider the project a success.

“Who would have ever thought at an alternative school, students would be excited about raising chickens,” asked Burton, noting that he had already heard a freshman discussing the activity at the bus stop the morning prior.

Mark Twain was founded in 2020 on North Main Street as a non-traditional school, serving grades 4-12. In addition to offering the credit recovery services of the former Graduation Center, Mark Twain houses the district’s JAG program through which students receive career exploration opportunities.

Pictured: Mark Twain students (from left) Jayden Bowler, Shawn Politte, Za’Riasis Cody, Mathew Reynolds and Aaron Barber pose behind the chicken coop they helped assemble.

Article and photo by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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