

ARTICLE FOR COUNTRY GAZETTE

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My grandma and grandpa on my mother's side were both school teachers. For many years they taught in a one room school. She taught the lower grades on one side of the room and he the upper grades on the other side. One of the first things we always did when we went to visit was to go see the classroom with grandma. She would show us the bulletin boards she had put together and the latest projects the children were working on. No child was "left behind" in their school. I'm not saying that they all learned their lessons equally well, but each child mattered to grandma and grandpa.

"No Child Left Behind," the government mandated program to bring children up to academic standards, is a good idea in principle, but academics is not all of life. There is so much that goes into helping children succeed in life. What they accomplish in school is only one aspect and what they work toward in school must be supported by their life outside the classroom.

The family is the starting place. When parents take seriously their role in effective parenting, they seek out educational opportunities for themselves. All parents can benefit from parenting classes that help us learn not to perpetuate behavior problems and ineffective patterns from our past. We know how important it is to spend time, one to one, with our children to answer their questions and to help them learn how valuable and special they are.

But the family by itself is not enough. It takes a whole community to raise a child, a community that cares enough to provide the needed resources to supplement what the schools can do in positive ways. Parks, yes. The Trail, yes. The Opportunity Center and Espresso Drama, yes. Tutoring and mentoring, yes. Research has shown that for a child to be successful in life he or she needs to have a caring relationship with adults beyond the family and school, people in the community who care about them personally. Through Communities In Schools of Orting and the Big Brother/Big Sister program people are trained to be mentors and connected with children who can benefit from their friendship.

When we look at the bigger picture in this way, then we have to take it the next step. Not only should no child be left behind. No person should be left behind. We want to be a community of people who care about each other, not just in times of emergency, but all the time. This is what Jesus taught and this is what the church stands for and continues to work for. Caring that reaches beyond ourselves and our own to a world in need of the deep love of Christ. In the eyes of Christ and in the true heart of the church, no one is left behind.