

January 14, 2008

To: Smitty

From: Monty Aldrich

THOUGHTS FROM THE UNIT OFFICE...

Things are much better for North Clay than just a few months ago, thanks to legislation passing with the BIMP bill. With difficult economic times and increasing costs due to gas prices, we can use all of the help that we can get. It seems like the cost of living and operating keep increasing with the oil prices. Everything is based upon shipping costs so we see rising prices everywhere. There was an increase in the funding level per student, and for the first time in many years there was an increase in special education reimbursement. Although these costs were supposed to be fully funded by the federal government many years ago, we are up to \$9,000 being paid for each special education teacher. We stood to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars if this bill wasn't implemented.

Our January 2 teacher institute started with Jim Burgett coming as a guest speaker. Each staff member was presented with one of his books he authored well before Christmas so that they could become familiar with his ideas. Jim is big on customer service, employee dedication, and fighting for rights in education. I was inspired by his words and I hope each staff member benefited from his speaking. Customer service is something that can be taken for granted in education. When dealing with people each and every day, it's more difficult to stay positive and fresh. I hope that even under stressful situations we encounter each day, we continue to provide a cordial and friendly environment in which to conduct business. When it comes to dealing with other people's children, it can be very emotional and intense. One of Mr. Burgett's messages was that we as professionals need to "leave our troubles on our doorsteps" so to speak. We all have baggage and tough situations in life to deal with but we owe it to the kids to provide a positive and productive environment. We also understand that there are times when we cannot deal with major issues and be productive and are understanding with employees in those situations. Achieving maximum production in a manufacturing setting or other environment is different than that of dealing with children. There are many variables including home life, personal life, environment, medical issues, social issues, etc. that come into play. If our customer service becomes less than desired during your visits or encounters, I would appreciate hearing from you.

Speaking of customer service, I visited the Chicago area again for a few days recently. Basically it was a shopping excursion but just observing how people are different is sometimes humorously worth the trip. We spent hours upon hours in a mall, and customer service seemed to be a thing of the past. That's what I like around here. You can go in a store, be spoken to in a genuine way, do business, and feel good leaving. If not, you don't go back. The bottom line is profit margin at these places, and you need to get your bags and move on. So what if it takes you extra time to check out? It all pays

the same. So what if you don't get a fork or spoon. What do you expect? It all pays the same. Who cares if I'm standing in your way. What are you going to do about it? It doesn't matter if you're pushing a stroller. I'm getting through. If you get in line and expect to stay in that order, good luck. You need a wide wingspan to hold back the rudest of the rude that obviously are short of time. Wow, and the road rage?

What does this have to do with education? Don't forget to appreciate what we have here! Please, please continue to teach your children manners and etiquette both at home and in public. Believe me, it goes a long, long way.

We continue to see kids giving in to peer pressure out there on a daily basis. Please talk to your kids and advise them of consequences regarding "doing what's cool to fit in" when you can. You'd be surprised of the things we hear and encounter regarding some of the issues that kids experience now (even young ones). We even have parents supplying alcohol or other items at times. I was glad to see the law pass that increases the penalties for those who choose to do this. We continue to see a volume of issues surface regarding prescription pills and experimentation. No matter who you are or who your kids are, stay on alert for changes in behavior, mood swings, attitude, etc. that might indicate a problem. It's here and it's dangerous.

Now to the meat and potatoes...I continue to see positive changes within our walls. We have some wonderful staff who will not give up in seeing that kids have a great opportunity to learn. All issues aside, these people really enjoy being around kids. That's more than half the battle. People who love kids and think they are awesome benefit all of us. These people put others before themselves and commit to what they were hired to do. It doesn't go unnoticed but if you like something they are doing, let them know it when you can. It gives them a boost occasionally when they get down. I think staff has committed to making things better around here for everyone, and they are teaching not only subject matter but life skills as well. They are caring for children as if they were their own while they are at our buildings each day. Keep up the good work!