

Benjamin Harrison art project reflects Leader in Me

MARION – Shards of glass and patient – though at times bloodied - hands came together to create a Benjamin Harrison Elementary art project focused around the school's The Leader in Me success.

Art teacher Lauren Zajdel and a group of parent volunteers worked together for the last few weeks of school to create a stained glass picture of a lighthouse scene. The picture depicts Harrison's success at becoming one of the first two Ohio schools to achieve The Leader in Me Lighthouse status.

"It's all for the kids," Zajdel said. "It was a lot of work but it's worth it because it's all for the kids."

The picture, which will be placed in front of the school before next school year, is 6 foot by 4 foot. It took about 200 manpower hours to complete. The team completed the task in a week and a half and unveiled it on Wednesday, the last day of school for students.

Parents Jen Robinson, Amber Cameron, Kathy Rollins, Erica Hart and Leslie Schneider worked with Zajdel to complete the project. None of them had ever worked with stained glass before.

"It's an amazing accomplishment," Cameron said. "I've always loved mosaics. You take all these amazing imperfect pieces and put them together for something beautiful."

Zajdel said every staff member got to place at least one piece of stained glass into the frame.

The Leader in Me program, one of Marion City Schools' four pillars of improvement, is a whole-school transformation model. Its basic message is that every student can be a leader. The hope for district administrators is that the program teaches leadership and soft skills in demand by area employers.

FranklinCovey, which oversees the internationally known Leader in Me program, notified Harrison in December that it achieved Lighthouse status. That means the school's completed four years in the program and met criteria that demonstrates staff and students understand and put into action the philosophy behind the program.

Zajdel focused on synergizing together, one of Leader in Me's seven habits, as she discussed the project.

"There is a synergy. Everyone had their own styles but it all came together," she said. "The hardest part is when you start getting to the last section of that center piece. That's when you truly shine in your synergy. It would not have been possible without my parent volunteers."

She and the volunteers admitted they had their share of cuts and scrapes as they swapped stories of wounds. Everyone, though, said they appreciated the experience.

"We really loved working together," Rollins said.