

The Buddy Bench

This week, Lester Holt's "Inspiring America Series" on NBC, featured a Harrisonville Elementary, 9 year-old who was striving to change the world one child at a time. After witnessing a fellow student alone and seemingly without a friend, she thought a lot about how that would feel and decided that she could not ignore it and needed to do something!

Proclaiming, "Everyone deserves a friend", she worked with her teachers to create **The Buddy Bench**. They placed a beautiful shiny, bright blue, metal park bench on the playground. What was significant about the bench was the slogan, "A friend is only a seat a way", which was cut out or stamped out of the metal at the top of the backrest of the chair.

The idea was that the bench was to become a **Tool** to help bring kids together...to help kids feel included. It was the young student's hope that this bench would help kids to learn to make friends...of course, she knew it would take a village to make it work, but she was optimistic.

Her vision was: If anyone ever felt alone or not included, they were encouraged to sit on the bench. Of course, classmates were instructed that, if and when they saw someone alone, they should go over to see if that individual would like to play with them.

Several accounts illustrated how this school community came together to make the Buddy Bench Process work. They reminded the viewer of the power of The Golden Rule. A little girl's empathy inspired the creation of The Buddy Bench Program with a happier, more inclusive, way to make friends.

Buddy Bench projects are springing up across our nation. Perhaps, this nine year old inspires us to see the potential in our own decision to believe we can make a difference if we decide to **do something rather than not**.