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Wednesday, December 19, 2012

News

Bellevue welcome sign could get solar lighting

Students offer \$750 donation to city

By **TONY EVANS**
 Express Staff Writer

Two years ago a group of Bellevue Elementary School fifth-graders took issue with their city's "Welcome to Bellevue" sign, because it was located next to portable toilets stored at the south entrance to town.

The students, led by teacher Bill Cantrell, succeeded in getting the sign moved to the other side of the highway, in part because city leaders discovered it was not on city property.

Last Thursday, Cantrell's new class of fifth-graders offered to spruce up the sign even further, providing drawings of proposed additions, including school mascot teddy bears on top, and landscaping below.

The students also presented a plan to install solar panels to light the sign at night, as well as \$750 to spend on the project.

"We have money to spend," said Cantrell, referring to his school's portion of a \$150,000 grant from the Wood River Foundation. The foundation is donating \$25 to each of 4,000 students in Blaine County to be dispersed by them for worthy causes.

"The Wood River Foundation was founded on the belief that generosity is what differentiates great communities. It is the thread that binds our community," reads a statement on the organization's website.

Cantrell's students provided results from a class experiment that determined the best angle to capture sunlight on solar panels near the sign.

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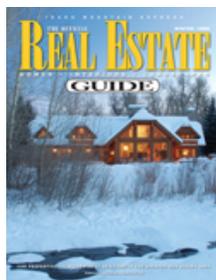


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The Bellevue City Council expressed unanimous support for putting solar panels and lighting on the sign, but did not support the teddy bears atop the sign.

Mayor Chris Koch agreed with Planning Director Craig Eckles that the students deserve recognition for getting the sign moved, and for their ongoing ideas.

Koch recommended that a group photograph be taken with the students under the sign in the spring. He said the photograph could then be posted prominently at City Hall, "so people will know what great children we have here in Bellevue."

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