Swanton Students Named Middle Level Scholar Leaders

Two sixth graders from Swanton have been named Middle Level Scholar Leaders by a team of teachers at Swanton Elementary School, the Vermont Association for Middle Level Education and the New England League of Middle Schools. The recognition honors students who have distinguished themselves as highly successful learners, leaders and community members.

Swanton Elementary School sixth graders Shelby Smith and Emiliano “Emi” Velez were nominated for the annual recognition by teachers who considered the students’ teamwork, positive interactions with others, respect, personal goals, dependability, productivity, service to others and respect for diversity, as outlined in the rigorous selection criteria.

“Shelby is an extremely hard worker and a natural leader. She pushes others to be their best selves while holding herself to the same standards,” art teacher Jacey Rivers wrote in her nomination of Smith. “She is compassionate towards others and speaks with care and understanding. Her level of empathy does not go unnoticed.”

“Emi understands the need for diversity of perspective,” sixth grade teacher Kim Gravett said in her nomination of Velez. “He seeks to honor diverse perspectives in others and takes ownership of his expectations in class. He wants to do well and pushes himself to provide the best work possible. He exhibits perseverance and holds himself to a high standard. He advocates for respect both inside and outside the classroom.”

Award recipients demonstrate evidence of meeting the established criteria, which are derived from the Vital Results and Fields of Knowledge sections of the Vermont Frameworks of Standards and Learning Opportunities.

“I was very surprised,” Smith said of receiving the award. “I wasn’t expecting this to happen. I am always helping out friends and classmates and I am always including everyone because it’s just the right thing to do. This award is really special, but doing the right thing and feeling great about that is the most important reward of all.”

“I felt really honored and excited to be recognized in this way,” Velez said. “I try to remember to always be kind to everyone and not think of myself as a better person than anyone else. I really try to help people as much as I can because it makes them feel welcome and accepted. Sometimes people can feel like they are alone but when they get helped by someone they will not feel as alone anymore.”

Velez and Smith cited hard work and perseverance with academics in the classroom as an important part of meeting their goals as students.

Both students were honored at the 25th Annual Scholar Leader Awards Celebration on June 1.