



PHOTO PROVIDED

Sisters Elementary School students commemorated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day with a march through Sisters.

Fourth-graders march on MLK Day

By Charlie Kanzig
Correspondent

Fourth-grade teacher Clay Warburton takes to heart the need for students, even at the elementary school level, to understand the courage, bravery, and persistence of the people involved in America's Civil Rights Movement and how they can discover their own ways to make a difference.

Warburton helped lead about 50 people — students, parents, and other community members — on a walk around Sisters on Martin Luther King Day. He shared with *The Nugget* the reasons behind the march.

"We teach a unit in our civics curriculum on civil rights that is connected to our fourth-grade standards. One of the 'big ideas' in this curriculum associated with the Civil Rights Movement is agency, which refers to developing your individual voice in your community."

Warburton organized "The March for Hope" within his own fourth-grade classroom and others were invited to join.

"Kids wrote down all their

hopes on their signs — it was not just about civil rights — it might have been things like 'Save the Turtles' or 'Protect the Environment' — things that kids care about."

"We invite everyone to come and hope this will grow," he said. "I would love it that we could do it every year. My students are not required to come, but nearly all of them who were in town made it. The kids were excited and I even got emails from kids who couldn't be there expressing how much they wanted to be part of it."

It is the second time Warburton has organized the march, and he hopes for it to continue in the future.

"We have been developing the ways we teach civics and how we can connect the concept of students developing their voice," he said. "When we try to connect with the national thread, to what is happening in our own state, the nation, and the world, with the conversation on things like civil rights, equity, and equality, we are helping the kids understand that they are a part of that conversation and action."

Warburton harkened to the civil rights heroes of the past in instructing his students.

"Helping them learn about these heroes who, as individuals, stood up and inspired literally millions of people to change their minds and their hearts and how they felt, is vitally important," he said.

Gail Greaney is serving Sisters School District this year as a teacher on special assignment with the title of "All Students Belong Coordinator," which is tied to the district's three-pillared goal of "Belong, Prepare, Inspire." She also teaches history and government at Sisters High School and has vast experience teaching about civil rights.

"I so appreciate what Clay is doing at the elementary level to foster students' ability to express what they care about in a tangible way," she said. "Using Martin Luther King, Jr. Day as a focus on teaching kids that each of them matter — in their own unique way — is powerful. We are all richer when each person not only feels they belong, but that they have a role in society."

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