

Safety pays, in a classroom makeover
April 23, 2009
by Morgan Wall



Morgan Wall/The News Amanda Sechrist is recognized at the Mount Airy Board of Education by Dr. Darrin Hartness, superintendent, and Wendy Carriker, board chair, for receiving the Got 2B Safe grant.

When Amanda Sechrist applied for the Got 2B Safe grant, she hoped to be one of the second place winners, receiving \$500 for classroom supplies.

When the special needs teacher at B.H. Tharrington Primary School received the phone call over spring break informing her that she was one of five grand prize winners in the country at first she thought it was a joke.

"I am so excited," she said.

The Got 2B Safe grant is a partnership with the organization, Honeywell and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. It provides a \$10,000 classroom makeover for the grand prize winners. An interior designer will come in and assess the needs of the classroom before taking it over during the summer to make the transformation.

"To get this is just really good. I'm so excited for the children," said Sechrist. "I hope to make this a collaborative effort with the occupational therapist, the physical therapist and the speech therapist to create an inviting multi-handicapped classroom."

In order to apply for the grant, Sechrist had to create a lesson plan using four safety rules. She decided to create Got 2B Safetyville, a village made from refrigerator boxes which the children could decorate. Within the village she would have different members of the community come in to teach the students

about the importance of safety. They would read stories and talk about issues that face children of that age to prepare them to be safe in the world around them.

"It's so great of them to do this grant. It can keep children safe and support the teacher," she said. "The whole school system's been excited."

In addition to the makeover, the program will fly Sechrist and Principal Lydia Lovell to Washington, D.C. for a Congressional breakfast and the Hope Awards.

This is Sechrist's first year as a special needs teacher and her first year with the Mount Airy City school system, but she has been teaching for seven years. This is the ninth grant she has received.

"This is definitely something I want to stick with for a little while. I'm just so attached to the students. They come in with these great attitudes," she said of teaching special needs children.

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Thumbs up
April 25, 2009

To Amanda Sechrist, a special needs teacher at B.H. Tharrington Primary School. Surry County and Mount Airy are blessed with a number of teachers who go above the normal call of duty to serve their students, and Sechrist really hit a home run when she applied for a grant from the Got 2B Safe agency. She won a \$10,000 classroom make-over grant, which means the classroom will be completely redone in a manner to better meet needs of the students.

The big winner in all of this? The students, who will now benefit for years to come from Sechrist's willingness to spend extra time and energy in putting together her grant application.

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Serving Surry County Since 1880

Sechrist Gets New Classroom
August 21, 2009
by Morgan Wall



Amanda Sechrist as well as some of her students and their siblings got their first look at her newly-refurbished classroom at Tharrington Primary School on Thursday.

[slideshow](#)

Towards the end of last school year, Amanda Sechrist found out she was one of five grand price recipients in a grant opportunity.

On Thursday, the results of that win became tangible. Sechrist is an exceptional children's teacher at B.H. Tharrington Primary School. She is the proud owner of a newly-refurbished classroom thanks to the grant sponsored by Honeywell and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Sechrist and four other teachers in the country received the \$10,000 classroom makeover based on their commitment to keeping children safer from abduction and sexual exploitation as part of the Got 2B Safe campaign.

Sechrist had her students create a pretend town called "Got 2B Safetyville" which used the program's four rules of safety, including check first, go with a friend, it's my body and tell a trusted adult. They made posters based on safety scenarios and turned refrigerator boxes into Safetyville stations. Sechrist then invited community members such as police officers, firefighters, teachers, parents and social workers to visit the class and read grade-appropriate stories dealing with safety.

"We are proud of Amanda's work to raise awareness for this critical issue," said Rich Faranda, regional sales manager for Honeywell, noting how Sechrist was able to convert the program to apply to special needs students.

Mayor Jack Loftis was one of the many people in attendance at the unveiling, including members of the police department, area business leaders and school administrators and board of education

representatives. Loftis read a proclamation in Sechrist's honor, proclaiming Aug. 20, 2009, to be Got 2B Safe Child Safety Day in the city of Mount Airy.

Sechrist was not the only one to get a first look at the new room. Her students were at the school for open house and were able to experience the unveiling before classes begin on Tuesday. They walked around the room, trying out all of the new materials from tables and chairs to a new reading area to the presence of street signs with each of their names hung around the room.

"I really am pleased with it," said Sechrist of the room. "It is visually stimulating, but I can also use these materials to help my students learn. It's so nice to have these shiny new products. I'm pleased with it, but more importantly, the students are. My students see all of these important people here for them. They are the best in the world, and I love them so much."

Sechrist created the self-contained exceptional children's classroom when she started at the school last fall.

"We are extremely fortunate here at Tharrington to have Amanda Sechrist," said Principal Lydia Lovell. "She cares about children and she's truly interested in everything they do. She has done so very much for this school."

This grant was created because of the alarming statistics involving children who go missing or are exploited in the world. It rewards teachers who go to innovative measures to ensure their students' safety both in the classroom as well as out. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 797,500 children were reported missing during a one year time period.