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Miss Kentucky visits includes talk of goal setting

By ANDREW HARP THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE
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Haley Wheeler, Miss Kentucky 2021, talks to fifth-grade students Friday at Cecilia Valley Elementary School.
ANDREW HARP/The News-Enterprise

Sporting a crown and sash, Miss Kentucky 2021 visited students at Cecilia Valley Elementary School on Friday.

Haley Wheeler, originally from Powell County, began her visit by speaking to a fifth-grade class where she discussed a number of subjects, including her history competing in pageants.

Candace Dailey, music and art teacher, reached out to the Miss Kentucky Scholarship Organization about a visit.

Dailey said she had kept up with the organization since she competed in pageants when she was younger.

Sponsored by the Department of Agriculture, visits to the school are free. She said she wanted to have Wheeler talk about perseverance and goal setting.

Starting when she was 15 in 2013, she competed and received high placings each year, but didn't become Miss Kentucky until this year.

She talked to students about setting goals and moving through failures. She talked about being successful which she said is defined by making other people feel good and making yourself feel good.

She also talked about her community service project on Alzheimer's. She told a story about how she was affected after her great-grandfather had been diagnosed with it when she was a teenager. During her visits, she also talks about agriculture in Kentucky and the importance of knowing where food comes from.

Wheeler graduated with her master's degree in speech pathology in May from Western Kentucky University, a major that she was inspired to study because of her great-grandfather's illness.

"I decided I was going to help people with Alzheimer's disease every single day because that's what I get to do in that job, and that's pretty special," she said to the students.

She said she visits schools about three or four times a week. Outside of visits and speeches, she works on the mobile science activity center.

Andrew Harp can be reached at 270-505-1414 or aharp@thenewsenterprise.com.

Andrew Harp