FIRE MEALS 11/09/2016 L. ERICKSON

River Falls High School consumer science teacher Kayte Koehler (KO-ler) is helping her students in her Connections class partner with kids who have special needs to cook meals every Monday for the community's volunteer firefighters. Special education teacher Cece Gillis says it’s a hands-on way to give back to the community. Lisa Erickson has the story.

MP3 RUNS 2:03 O/C: STD.

LISA ERICKSON: THE STUDENTS ARE LEARNING MORE THAN JUST HOW TO COOK. RIVER FALLS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, JACOB CRAFT AND MEGAN LONEY, WERE SURPRISED ABOUT WHAT THEY LEARNED IN THE CLASS.

JACOB CRAFT: THAT LIKE HOW EASY IT IS TO CONNECT WITH THE SPECIAL ED KIDS IF YOU PUT FORTH AN EFFORT. CAUSE I THOUGHT COMING IN TO IT, IT WOULD BE A LOT HARDER. IT'S EASY TO HAVE A GOOD TIME AND WORK WITH THEM.

MEGAN LONEY: JUST TALKING WITH THEM IF THEY DON’T UNDERSTAND SOMETHING THEY WILL SAY I DON’T KNOW OR WILL SHAKE THEIR HEAD. THEY UNDERSTAND, WHICH IS SOMETHING... THEY WANT TO LAUGH AND HAVE FUN WITH ALL OF US AND BE PART OF THEY WANT TO BE A PART OF IT.

LISA ERICKSON: THE STUDENTS HAVE HAD A LOT OF FUN IN THE CLASS. THEY MADE ALL DIFFERENT KINDS OF MEALS.

STUDENTS, TEACHERS: SLOPPY JOES, WE DID THOSE TACOS, TACOS, OH YEAH A TACO BAR, TATER TOT HOTDISH, PORK THING, CHICKEN MASALAS, RIBS, PORK LOIN, SPAGHETTI, SPAGHETTI SAUCE, THINGS WITH SPAGHETTI. WELL, I LIKE THE DESSERTS. I LOVE DESSERTS. TOWARDS THE END MY KITCHEN PUT ME IN CHARGE OF MAKING PUMPKIN BARS. I THOUGHT I MESSED THE WHOLE THING UP, BUT THEY TURNED OUT. THAT WAS A GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENT.

LISA ERICKSON: SCOTT NELSON, THE RIVER FALLS FIRE CHIEF, IS REALLY HAPPY THE STUDENTS COOK FOR THEM.

SCOTT NELSON: WHEN I GOT HERE WE HAD PICKLE AND PIMENTO LOAF AND POTATO CHIPS FOR A MEAL BEFORE TRAINING. AND THE REASON FOR THAT WAS SIMPLY BECAUSE PEOPLE COME FROM WORK. WELL, FOR THE SAME MONEY, WE GOT THE HIGH SCHOOL COOKING CLASS. THEY MAKE US MEALS ARE DOING THE SHOPPING AND EVERYTHING ELSE, SO THEY'RE LEARNING BUDGET. THE ONLY PROBLEM I'VE GOT IS IN THE SUMMER WHEN THEY AREN'T COOKING FOR US.

LISA ERICKSON: FOR THE FALCON NEWS SERVICE, I’M LISA ERICKSON.

The class has been cooking meals for the fire department for over five years.

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