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EDUCATION

'Help each other grow'

BY JON POMPIA
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Just in case the students at Minnequa Elementary School needed reminding, it's hometown heroes, not celebrities or professional athletes, who make the world go 'round.

Together with colleagues from two schools in India, including the Siddhartha School, Bush School in Washington, Rockland Country Day School in New York and North Yarmouth Academy in Maine, the students are part of the Heroes Elevate Empathy Project: Going Local.

This arts-based campaign encourages children 10-18 to shine a light through a portrait and short essay on inspirational, close-to-home figures who have made a positive impact in their lives.

An international ambassador for the project is Geshe Tsewang Dorje, a Tibetan monk and director of the Siddhartha School, who on Monday visited with Minnequa students to encourage them on their journey toward empathetic enlightenment.

Geshe Tsewang Dorje said that for children, there are few things more noble than using art to honor the unheralded.

"Heroes usually are famous

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persons," he explained. "But it's important for children to select their own hero — their mother, father or friend.

"This helps keep a good relationship between parents and their children, friends and the children. And it also increases a student's knowledge as to the important things in life."

Geshe Tsewang Dorje's visit was coordinated by retired district court Judge Victor Reyes, a practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism who spent two weeks volunteering at the Siddhartha School

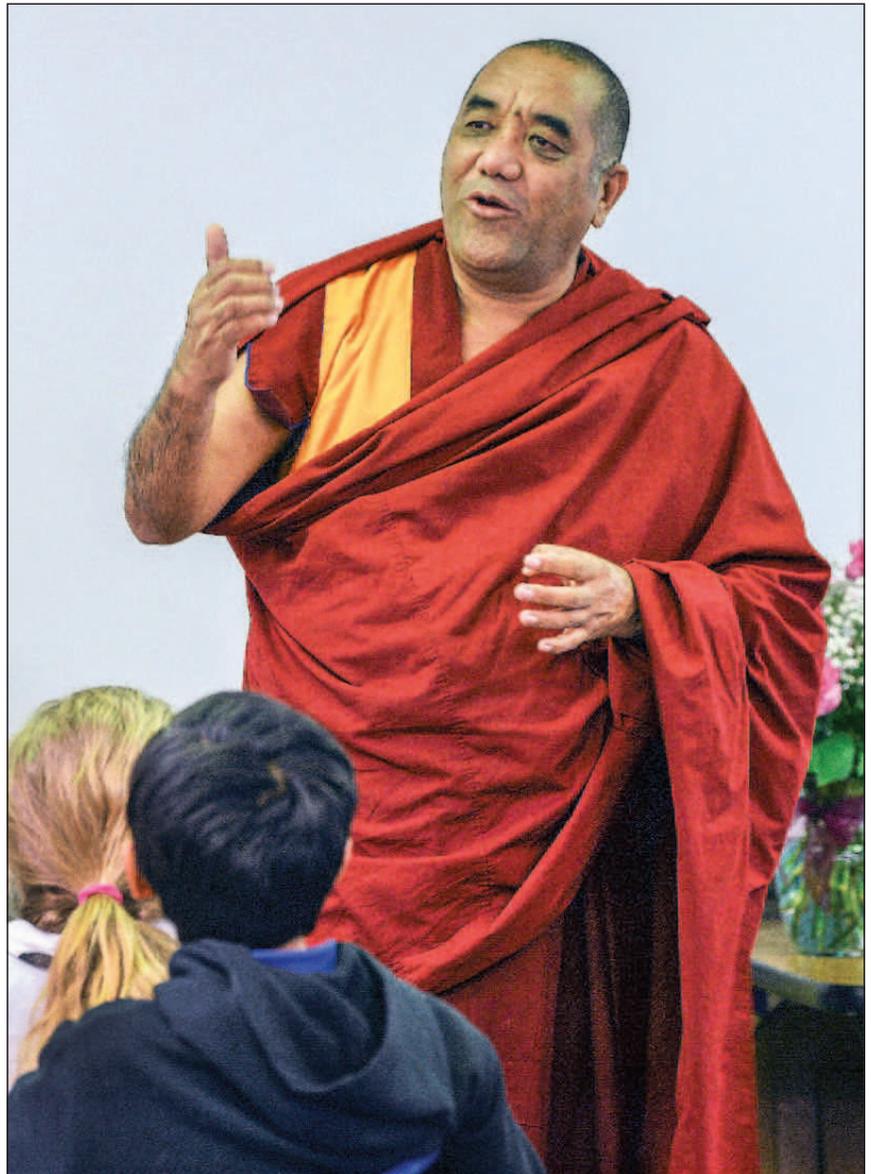
over the summer.

And in the eyes of fifth-grader Alyssa Hernandez-Rodriguez, someone worthy of being honored.

"Judge Reyes is my hero because he helps our community and our school improve," said Alyssa as she showed off a pencil sketch of her subject. "He wants us kids to be more like him."

Classmate Zoie Martinez plans to honor Karen Conry, the longtime heart and soul of Dream Weavers of Southern Colorado.

SEE WISDOM, 7A



CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/JOHN JAQUES

Geshe Tsewang Dorje, a Tibetan monk and director of the Siddhartha School in India, visits with Minnequa Elementary School students on Monday.



You are not studying only for the money or to become a high-level person. You are studying to become a good person, a helpful, loving person who respects your teacher, friends and relatives, and who brings love to others.

GESHE TSEWANG DORJE
TIBETAN MONK

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“Karen has done a lot for children with life-threatening illnesses,” Zoie said. “I think this project is teaching us that anyone can be a hero, even when no one’s watching.”

As insightful and wise as he is humble, Geshe Tsewang Dorje took a few minutes to impart some vital life lessons to the inquisitive Minnequa gallery.

“What you’re doing here, the education, is very important in your life,” he said. “It’s hard work, but it’s very important to study — for peace, happiness and love for everybody.

“You are not studying only for the money or to become a high-level person. You are studying to become a good

person, a helpful, loving person who respects your teacher, friends and relatives, and who brings love to others.”

The Siddhartha School and Minnequa are partnered in the Heroes Elevate Empathy Project not as a competition, but rather to “share knowledge in order to help each other grow,” Geshe Tsewang Dorje told the children.

The school director also fielded a handful of questions from the fifth graders, replying to each with a hearty helping of wit.

“How many languages do I speak? Several, and that includes broken English,” Geshe Tsewang Dorje said with a smile.
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