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“MAKING MIDDLETOWN MARVELOUS” — KATIE TAVARES

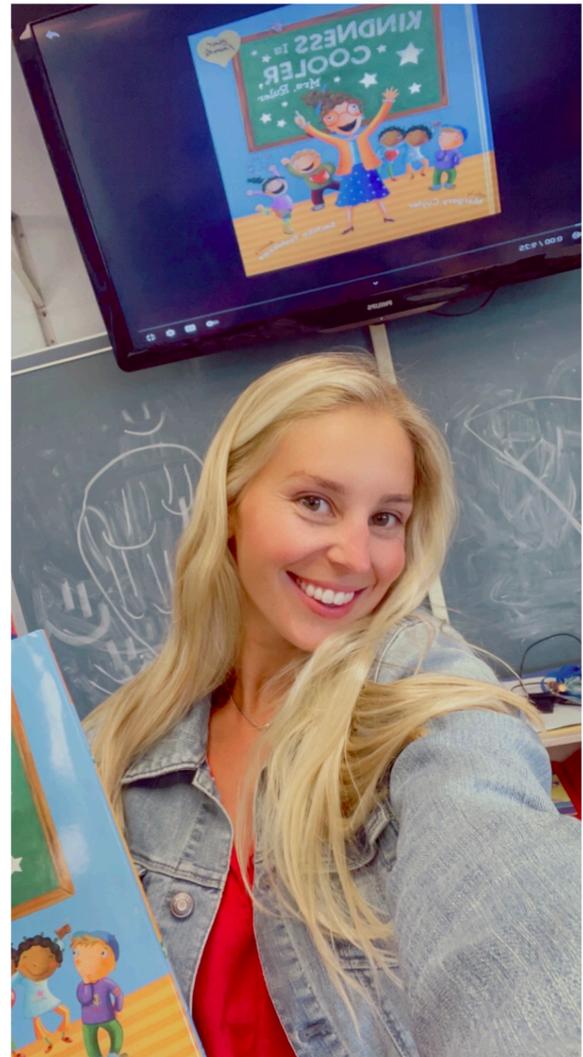
MIDDLETOWN, R.I. (JUNE 20, 2022) – Just getting to school and making it through the day is an accomplishment for some students.

As the Homeless and Family Liaison for the Middletown school system, Katie Tavares knows this reality far too well.

A social worker by trade, Tavares said she always tries to emphasize the positives for students and staff, just part of the reason she was nominated recently for “Making Middletown Marvelous.”

“The reason I went into social work is I want to help others like my former teachers and educators helped me in the past,” Tavares said. “I became a social worker because I wanted to be able to help others and in a way repay others who have helped and supported me throughout my life. I have a passion for guiding others in the right direction and proving an ear to listen to.”

Tavares works under the guidance of Aquidneck Elementary School Principal Erica Bulk and Superintendent Rosemarie K. Kraeger through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The federal act provides rights and services to children and youth experiencing homelessness. That includes those sharing housing with others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or



a similar reason; staying in motels, trailer parks, or camp grounds due to the lack of an adequate alternative; staying in shelters or transitional housing; or sleeping in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, or similar settings.

Despite what some might think, there is a real problem with homelessness in Middletown. According to 2021 data from Rhode Island Kids Count, Middletown has the second highest level of childhood homelessness in the state, trailing only Providence. That's where experts like Tavares and others in the school community step in to help, rallying around each student to provide additional supports for success.

"Unfortunately, there is an issue of homelessness in Middletown," Tavares said. "As the District Homeless and Family Liaison, I provide services to the children and youth in the McKinney-Vento Program to help them overcome obstacles and barriers to receiving an education and assist families with social services needs. I plan, oversee, and monitor those social services. Under the direction of Superintendent, Rosemarie Krager and Aquidneck Elementary School, Principal, Erica Bulk, I am the bridge between the home, school, and community, with the goal of supporting children and families to achieve and make sure their basic needs are met and children can attain educational success within Middletown Public Schools. I work with students and parents, building staff, and community members to meet the needs of the all students."

Bulk said Tavares was a great part of the team at Aquidneck School.

"She is a proactive social worker who is always working with students and families," Bulk said. "She is always willing to work with kids to help them navigate their emotions. She is friendly and welcoming to all. She works as a great team member to get students and families the services that they need. She is always in classes and hallways to help students feel welcomed at Aquidneck."

Seeing the incremental change is one of the benefits of her job, Tavares said.

"The positives of my position are I am able to promote school culture and encourage students' success," Tavares said. "I develop and maintain professional relationships with families that recognize each family's individual strengths. I engage parents in their children's educational activities and foster their support for their children's educational success. I assist with building positive relationships between, parents, and children via interaction with classroom and home settings."

Tavares said the ability to help others everyday is a huge asset of the work she does in Middletown.

"I wear a smile on my face every day and encourage students to find positives in their day," Tavares said. "My life motto is 'It's the little things that matter the most!' I find happiness working with students, I have the best of both worlds, being the school social worker and also teaching students social and emotional learning. Being positive and upbeat is part of my being as a person. I love my job and I am happy every day to go to

work. Each day is different. Some days are fun some days are challenging but having a positive attitude makes me always look on the bright side.”

That upbeat attitude not only works for Tavares, but others around her too.

“The children know Ms. Tavares wants them to succeed and is there to cheer them on and guide them on their educational journey,” Tavares said. “The children in the Middletown School District know Ms. Tavares promotes positive thinking, smiling and positivity in general...At Aquidneck School, you can find Ms. Tavares teaching social emotional lessons. Some of the topics she covers are kindness, empathy, bullying, relationship skills, responsible decision-making and self-awareness.”

To suggest a “Making Middletown Marvelous” nominee, visit <https://mdl.town/Marvelous> online and submit a form and photo and the Town will take care of the rest.

Document Link: <https://www.middletownri.com/DocumentCenter/View/5044/Marvelous-Katie-Tavares>