Looking at both sides now

SHS Principal Dan Kelley visits China, says our students need to have global perspective

By Dick Martin

The globe is shrinking and students of the 21st century need to be ready for it. That was the basic message Smithfield High School principal Dan Kelley brought back from his recent trip to China as part of the collaborative effort between Bryant University, the Confucius Institute and Smithfield High.

“Our kids don’t realize there’s a whole other world out there,” explains Kelley. “We have to do a better job of creating kids who are globally aware.”

To that end the high school has hooked up with Bryant in what is referred to as the Confucius Institute, whose primary mission is to help create academic, business, and cultural partnerships between the two countries. Through a grant, Smithfield High provides opportunities for students to learn about Chinese culture and even learn the language. The institute particularly focuses on the connection between K-12 schools and communities in New England.

The three trips to China which Kelley has experienced so far have given him a first-hand, clearer understanding not only of their educational system, but of Chinese culture and how they live, lessons which he will pass on to students and faculty both at the high school and at William Winsor School, which is part of the institute, as well.

“The most powerful thing I learned,” he adds, “is how their schools are run.”

Most, he explains, are run with governmental control to a great extent, not unlike factories in some ways, with an abundance of emphasis on rote learning and programmed approaches to curriculum. He described them as somewhat cold and standardized in many ways, including the buildings in which they are housed. Children are expected to learn their multiplication tables and even how to play the piano before five years of age. On his most recent trip, however, he discovered a whole new approach to Chinese education in Zhuhai. This elementary school focused on the arts, and the group of visitors found students engaged in a variety of creative activities from painting to singing. The approach was not much different from some of the charter or specialized art schools found in the U.S.

“That was the most unique school I have ever visited,” Kelley says. “It was all about creativity.”

Creativity or the lack thereof, he explains, is a major concern in China. Most of the educational approaches he had previously witnessed there were more “directed” in terms of both instruction and expectations, with the schools oftentimes engaged in what is commonly referred to as “teaching to the test.” China, he adds, may be the leader in test scores, but the U.S. is the leader in patents, in inventing new and different ways of doing things. There are other variables which people fail to consider in comparing the two countries in terms of education also.

“I think one of the challenges we face in education is we want to compare ourselves to everybody else in the world,” Kelley adds. “We educate everyone. In China some kids (special needs and other lower achievers) are pushed to the side. It is not an apples to apples comparison. The neatest thing is their questions about how we use and teach creativity.”

There are other lessons learned as well which emphasize the importance of a global perspective for everyone today and especially in the future as the world continues to shrink and we find our “backyard” neighbors and/or business associates are living not necessarily in the next town over, but the next conti-
iPads, ear buds, and jeans. Travelers could hail a taxi or jump into a rickshaw. There were other more subtle conflicts also.

“It's a struggle between past and future,” he adds. “I sense a struggle among the Chinese between keeping the traditions of the past and the expansion of technology. China is developing so fast. I see a huge disparity between the haves and the have-nots.”

Ironically, the Kelleys met up with Rose Kozar, a 2008 graduate of Smithfield High who is studying abroad in China.

“I was excited to see a former student studying abroad,” wrote Kelley in his online blog about the adventure. “To hear her perspectives two years out of high school made me feel better about how Smithfield High is preparing students for a global economy.”

Don't be surprised if more Smithfield High graduates are soon on their way to what was once the “other side of the world” as well.

---

**Crossword Solution**

```
B R A S E R A S I B E N
O O Z E T E S T S U I T A
S T U N N A S H Y O R L O N
C A R N E G I E M E L L O N
S E A R E D I D A L E R E A T A B L E
E F F A C E M E N I A L
D I R T T A N K
G R O O V Y S T A S E S
E N E M I E S C H U T A R R A N T
D U T C H E S S O F Y O R K
P A S N E O A A H U M A I A
A N D E S D R E D D H I L L
P E A S E Y A W S S A L E
```

---

**Conservation**

Continued from page 49

from hungry predators.

Many invertebrates hide themselves away too. Some die at the end of the summer but their eggs, larvae, or pupae spend the winter hidden away, ready to continue their life-cycle when the spring arrives. Moisture presents the danger of internal freezing, so a cry spot is the safest. Most female spiders, for example, leave their eggs in a fluffy, whitish cocoon, tucked away under a log or in a corner of a building. Thousands of tiny spider eggs are released from the cocoon in the spring. Gypsy moth eggs can often be found on the trunks of trees. They look a little like a patch of tan fuzz with bumps in it. Praying mantis egg cases can usually be found in an unmowed field. The case looks a bit like a piece of tan-colored foam glued to a plant stem.

Another adaptive behavior for many overwintering plants and animals is to make the most of a blanket of snow. Air is trapped amongst the snowflakes as they fall, and this provides good insulation. The temperature under a layer of snow does not usually fall below freezing. The heat from any animals or plants under the snow is trapped in a warm ‘igloo’. The polar bear even digs out a den on snowy slopes to give birth or shelter during blizzards. It curls up and lets the snow drift around its body to form an insulating layer.

Many plants also survive in warm pockets under the snow, waiting for the snow to melt so they can then burst into growth. If winds blow the snow away they may become frozen. The snowdrop is a ‘snow-piercer’. The tip of the flowering stem is covered by a special protective leaf and this allows the snowdrop flower to force its way up through the snow for a small gift of sun. Very small mammals such as mice, voles, and lemmings can remain active throughout the winter, searching for plant food in a network of tunnels under the snow. These tiny ridge-like pattern-tracings in the snow can often be seen on the path up to Mercer Outlook. Snow fleas feed off algae and lichen at the base of trees and absorb rays from the sun and the reflection off the bright snow. They can be found actively hopping around the surface of the snow on mild winter days.

Some other species overwinter as adults in large colonies, keeping each other warm. Honeybees huddle together in their hive, consume pounds of honey, and vibrate their wings for warmth. Ladybugs cluster under rocks or logs, and many other sheltered corners such as the corner of a garden shed. They also often overwinter in colonies in thick hollow stems, amongst leaf litter, and around window and door edges. In the winter most ants die off, but the queen and many of her dedicated workers, as well as eggs and pupae, live deep underground and do quite well. Humans huddle around the fireplace, usually in small groups, occasionally consuming anti-freeze-like substances. Anything to fight the cold.

---

Puzzle on Page 55

72 Year Smithfield Magazine, February 2012