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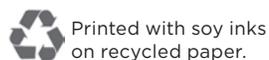
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IN PROFILE

Principal offers message of courage

BY KARIE ANGELL LUC | Contributor

Doug Bolton, administrator/principal of North Shore Academy in Highland Park, is a neighbor whose influence spans beyond Evanston borders. In the spirit of the holidays, he offers a "Circle of Courage" message of perpetual hope.

Who is Doug Bolton?

I grew up in small town outside of Syracuse, N.Y. called Skaneateles. My mom was a social worker and my dad wrote about, and taught, communication skills. I feel like I borrow from each of their lives in my work at North Shore Academy. I went to Bates College in Maine and got my Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Vermont. I came to the Chicago area in 1994 to do my internship at Children's Memorial. I met my wife, Kathy Grant, in graduate school and she is currently a psychologist at DePaul University. Kathy and I moved to Evanston in 1995 and have lived here ever since. We have three children: Angelique is an Evanston Township High School and DePaul grad, Matthew is sixth grader at Nichols Middle school, and Anna is a fourth grader at Dewey Elementary School. When I am not at work or with my family, I love to read, woodwork, kayak, and hike and camp.

What is North Shore Academy?

North Shore Academy is a K-12 school in Highland Park that supports the kids who struggle to cope effectively with the stresses of school. Our goal is to provide a school community that helps kids build the skills they need to manage school and life effectively. Although our



Dr. Doug Bolton, Highland Park North Shore Academy administrator, is an Evanston resident who is inspired by the Circle of Courage. | **KARIE ANGELL LUC**-for Sun-Times Media

main goal is to help kids return successfully to their home school, we provide a lot of supports to prepare them to thrive as adults. Our work is to create a sense of community where students feel like they belong and can connect, often for the first time in their lives. We do that through a philosophy called the Circle of Courage.

What is the Circle of Courage?

The Circle of Courage was developed by three psychologists to help therapeutic programs strengthen the resilience of at-risk kids. They found that there are four universal human needs that, if nurtured, will enhance and sustain healthy development. The first need is belonging; feeling valued and accepted within a community. The second is mastery, which really refers to developing skills and competence and engagement in things you love to do. The third is independence: the ability to find your voice so that you can get your needs met. And the fourth is generosity, which is not only being the recipient of a generous community but also to have the ability to recognize the gifts you have to share with others in your community.

What does the Circle of Courage look like at North Shore Academy?

The Circle of Courage really drives our programming. Staff members at NSA

are remarkably warm, patient and compassionate with kids, which naturally fosters belonging. Here in Evanston, it has been wonderful to watch my son, Matthew, have these needs fulfilled at Nichols Middle School.

What does the word "misunderstood" mean to you?

When I think of the word misunderstood, I think of our students who are filled with both remarkable resilience and vulnerability but who, I think, are defined by society for their worst and hardest moments.

How can the North Shore community open its heart to NSA's mission?

I think the North Shore community has already started to open its heart our students, but we still have a long way to go. My hope is that the community can see places like NSA as places of healing and growth. NSA is part of the Northern Suburban Special Education District that serves the students from Lake Forest, Deerfield, Highland Park, the Glenbrook schools, and New Trier. When we have openings, we also have students from as far away as Evanston, Barrington and Libertyville. I think that it is really valuable having students from a broad and diverse community within our school.

During this time of year that is so focused on giving, I often reflect on how thankful I am to work with such an amazing students, parents and staff and to work in a district, the Northern Suburban Special Education District, that places such high value on educating all kids regardless how challenging and disarming their behaviors may be.

I also love having students from Evanston at NSA. As a family, we often see students in the community and my children have gotten to experience their warmth and gratitude. I really enjoy the combination of being a parent, a principal and a psychologist - I feel like each role has informed and enriched the others. I'm really lucky to be able to work with the kids and families and staff that I work with. Children and families often come to our school with dreams that are broken and I'm inspired every day by the power of a community to help them heal, change, and succeed. ■