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SAT prep gets students to help buy livestock for those in need

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The Journal News*

CHAPPAQUA - An online SAT tutoring site is out not only to boost your test score, but also to feed hungry children around the world.

Educator Laura Wilson has pledged about 15 percent of her company's profit toward providing livestock to struggling areas of Africa and Asia, through the Heifer Foundation.

"My whole thing is you are educating your mind and you're making the world a better place," said Wilson, who has taught in schools from Chappaqua and Scarsdale to the Bronx and Chicago. "Giving back to communities has always been one of my true focuses."

The site, at www.WilsonDailyPrep.com, is a comprehensive resource with an array of testing tips and strategies. A subscription costs \$59 per month or \$389 for nine months. Services are free for students enrolled in the on-site tutoring program in Chappaqua.

One essential component of the site is a daily quiz of six questions, which is e-mailed to students and covers various aspects of the test such as vocabulary, sentence completion, reading comprehension, grammar and math.

Students can work to donate various livestock - such as chickens, rabbits, ducks or sheep - simply by logging on and answering the questions.

Each correct answer earns a student points that can be allocated toward his or her animal of choice. The bigger the animal, the more points are required.

The Heifer Foundation is the group that actually receives the donation. Supporting 9.2 million families in more than 125 countries, the foundation aims to make families self-reliant by providing gifts of livestock and agricultural training.

"I picked the Heifer Foundation because students can see real, tangible ways that they are helping," Wilson said.

The Web site grew out of Wilson's tutoring business in Chappaqua, where she started with four students eight years ago. Today she boasts about 100 students enrolled for on-site lessons and 400 students signed up nationwide for the Web services.

Earlier this week, a steady stream of students trickled in and out of the WilsonDailyPrep classrooms at 144 King St.

They were there to see Mother Nudge.

Mother Nudge, it turns out, is Wilson's alter ego. She is the woman who nudges students to study every day - and isn't afraid to call home should a student skip an assignment.

Mother Nudge is loud. Mother Nudge is strict. But Mother Nudge wants nothing more than the students to succeed, Wilson said.

"I find this very exciting. Kids don't find this very exciting. But if you practice something every day, you're going to get better at it," Wilson said. "The great thing is we hold students accountable."

Horace Greeley High School juniors Julia Deutsch and Oliver Saxs were among those studying this week under Mother Nudge's watchful eye - quite literally. She was standing over their shoulders as they tackled practice questions, giving them hardly a second to read through the question before hounding them for answers.

"Why can't it be 'C'? Without even reading the question?" she asked.

"Because it's the longest," Saxs answered without missing a beat.

"Right, shorter is sweeter," Wilson replied.

It's not only sweeter, but also sweetest! It was written right there on the classroom wall in big capital letters, along with other pithy adages to keep in mind come test day: "Shortest is sweetest."

It's these types of little tricks - and the daily barrage of quiz questions - that the students think will improve their performance come crunch time.

Plus, there's the bonus of having all the hard work pay off in more important ways than turning out a high test score.

"It's not only using my intelligence for the test," Saxs said, "but also for a good cause."

Additional Facts

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