



Capital for a Day: Blunt visits Fairview

By Rebecca Haines
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CARTHAGE, Mo. -

One of the sites Gov. Matt Blunt visited during his trip to Carthage on Friday was Fairview Elementary School.

Blunt read "The Mitten," to Michelle Hyder's kindergarten class, and visited with Peggy Lucas's third grade class.

"Missouri's children are the future of our state, and it is essential that we provide them with a safe learning environment free from incidents of violence and substance abuse," Blunt said. "By educating students on the dangers of substance abuse and violence through programs like SPIRIT initiative, we are preparing them for future success."

Observing School-based Prevention Intervention and Resources Initiative (SPIRIT), Carthage is one of five school SPIRIT sites in Missouri, funded by the Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse for the past six years. Pleasant Valley, Fairview and Columbian, the Carthage Junior and High Schools are all SPIRIT schools. Angie Stuckenschneider, prevention director at the Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, said the only reason the other two elementary schools are not in the program is because of lack of funding.

"This is a very positive program that has a very positive effect on the schools," said Dr. Gary Reed, superintendent for the R-9 district.

As part of the SPIRIT program, PeaceBuilders was also recognized on Blunt's visit with third graders. The students recited the pledge to the governor, and then participated with any questions they had for him. The students had also written letters to the governor, which he took with him when he left.

Reed and Fairview School Principal Ronna Patterson said they were pleased with the governor's visit to the school. Friday was the last day of classes before spring break, but the students did not show any eagerness. In fact, the third graders provided several questions and showed enthusiasm to meet Blunt.

"That was so genuine from the children," Patterson said. "It was perfect. It's an exciting day in so many aspects."

If the General Assembly approves Blunt's budget recommendations for the fiscal year 2009, he will have delivered an increase of \$1.2 billion since January 2005, ensuring Missouri teachers and students have the resources they need to succeed.