

For Immediate Release:

For Additional Information Contact: Andrew Olson, VP Business Banking
Phone: (888) 728-1954

Springfield, Illinois: As a community bank, Peoples Bank & Trust recognizes the value of volunteerism in our communities. To commend and promote volunteerism, Peoples Bank & Trust has established a program to recognize individuals who have exhibited a commitment to community service through volunteer work.

Peoples Bank & Trust has selected Kara Clark as our current Volunteer of the Quarter for her work with the Harvard Park Reading Mentoring program.

The Harvard Park Reading Mentoring program started about 20 years ago when Community Partners volunteered to meet with students one-on-one during the lunch hour 2-3 days a week. The program has continued since then, only missing a few years due to Covid. Kara was asked to restart the program three years ago. They generally meet from October- April.

The program has 17 mentors at this time who come to Harvard Park on Wednesday and Thursday, one hour a week and meet with two students during the lunch hour each day. At this time, they have 34 third-fifth grade students who meet with the Mentor weekly. Students are selected by HP Reading Coach and staff based on student needs; sometimes for academic reasons, sometimes for social/emotional reasons. Data from Reading and Math assessments are used for academic support and some students need social/emotional support. The Mentors work with the same student all year and if possible, some have had the same student for more than one year. Students sometimes just need a positive role model and someone to talk to them one on one and the Mentors do a great job getting to know the students, asking about family and weekend activities, holidays, and just talking at times.

Students have folders with reading and math worksheets, some fun seasonal sheets to work on with mentors and "just right book bags" that have 4-7 books for them to choose to read with the mentor. Kara provides miscellaneous Reading and Math worksheets and fun sheets and the books they use are from the HP Literacy Lab. Kara knows the students reading level and finds leveled books for each student at their level. These books are rotated every 3 months or so.

At the major holidays- Halloween, Christmas, Valentine Day, Easter- they have "party" day- play Holiday Bingo and the Mentors bring in Snacks, treats, and drinks. They like to give away "prizes" on these days. Mentors provide candy for Bingo winners- but would love to have selections of Scholastic paperback books, flash cards- math facts, letters, vocabulary words, etc. that could be our prizes and then students would also have some academic things to take home and keep. They play Bingo in a way that every student wins each time we play!!

If funds were available, Kara would also like to purchase books to give them at the end of mentoring. She asks the students at the beginning of the year the kinds of books they like to read and she tries to find those in the literacy lab, but those books are limited. She would like to get them a book that they

don't have access to here from our Literacy lab.

Peoples Bank and Trust is honoring Kara Clark for her community service with a donation to the Harvard Park Mentoring program and her name has been added to a Volunteer of the Quarter plaque, which is displayed in the bank's lobby.

Peoples Bank & Trust is an independent Community Bank with thirteen offices located in Pana, Taylorville, Altamont, Arthur, Arcola, Charleston, Tower Hill, Springfield, Morrisonville, Palmyra, Tuscola, Waverly and White Hall. Peoples Bank & Trust is a full-service bank offering outstanding customer service to consumers, small businesses and farmers in Central Illinois. People First Bancshares, Inc., with corporate offices in Pana, Illinois, is the holding company for Peoples Bank & Trust.