

Educators motivate educators - Omaha World-Herald (NE) - August 21, 2007 - page 01E

August 21, 2007 | Omaha World-Herald (NE) | Page 01E

Teachers never know who may be greatly inspired by their teaching. Sometimes, if they are fortunate, they may find out later about students they touched deeply.

During my second year of teaching, I had a young man in my fifth-grade class at Franklin Elementary School named Robert Ingram III.

He embraced learning with fervor. He never was disruptive, and he got along well with other students and made sure his work was impeccable. I knew Robert, now a principal at Bellevue's Fairview Elementary, would be successful.

Recently, at a surprise 50th birthday celebration for Robert, he said, "Mrs. Gilmore, Dr. Martin Luther King was killed the year I was in your classroom. I remembered how upset you were. You even cried. We really didn't understand why you were so upset, but you patiently explained the significance of Dr. King and why his death was such a big loss to our society. You stressed that we should choose a profession that has a positive impact on society. It was then that I decided to be a teacher."

His heartfelt words reminded me of Proverb 25:11: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver."

Robert lived in north Omaha and came from a family of nine children. His mother and father, Lillian and Robert, are humble people who love their children and the Lord. I can't remember a time when Robert was in my classroom that his parents didn't attend a school event.

During the celebration, his mom recalled putting all nine children into the family station wagon. "I felt it was important to have my children with me. We would even go to the grocery store together. And we had them at church every Sunday and for other spiritual activities."

One of her boys once ate an apple at the store. Mom marched him right up to the cashier with the apple core and made him pay for it. "I wasn't afraid to discipline them at the store or anyplace else," she said. "And because of this, they knew how to behave themselves in public."

In addition to attending Franklin, Robert went to **Howard Kennedy** Elementary School and Tech Junior and Senior High Schools. He later earned multiple degrees from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He has worked for Bellevue Public Schools his entire professional career and soon will receive a doctorate in education administration.

His many achievements are no surprise. His mother encouraged all of her children to go to college. Her children include an architect, an Army major, a Navy retiree and another school

administrator.

And just as his mother and father demonstrated love of family, so does Robert. He has a lovely wife, Cizette, and two children: Angelique, 17, and Robert IV, 14.

The Ingram family grew up with love and respect for one another. As an extended family, including grandchildren, great-grandchildren, cousins, nieces, nephews, aunts and uncles, they are very close-knit. Robert now has former students who tell him how he inspired them! He reminds his teachers that they never know what long-term positive effects they may have on students.

CITATION (APA STYLE)

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