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Ulysses seniors adopt highway project

While many high school seniors are focused on senior pictures, graduation announcements and deciding what their next steps will be after high school graduation, three Ulysses High School seniors are partnering with KDOT District Six staff to keep their community and highways clean as part of their senior service learning project. When Connor Beims, Austen Everett, and David Vasquez had an interest in a project geared towards the outdoors, Senior English teacher, Jodi Pfingsten visited with them about the highways and KDOT's Adopt a Highway program.

As part of the project, Connor, Austen, and David will be working with local organizations in Ulysses and Grant County to revive the Adopt a Highway Program by making organizations aware of the program and coordinating sign-ups and clean-ups in the Ulysses/Grant County area. They will be contacting all organizations that have signed up for a route in District Six to update contact information, to determine when the last clean-up was, and to confirm the organization's interest in participating in KDOT's Adopt a Highway program.

According to Pfingsten, all students at Ulysses High School are required to complete five hours of community service each year. During the students' junior year Pfingsten likes to have the students perform their five hours of community service in one area in the community so the students begin to build relationships. As seniors, the service project must incorporate an outside agency and contain a project management variable which teaches students to take a big project and break it down into smaller short-term goals with varying responsibilities. This helps students develop communication skills and learn how relationships work.

According to Joe Finley, KDOT's District Six Maintenance Engineer, many of the Adopt A Highway organizations signed up a number of years ago and haven't reported any clean-ups or been contacted in the last several years. "We are excited to have help with this program in Southwest Kansas and especially interested in having this group of young men show an interest in the program. We are anxious to get their input on how we can revive the program and make it more appealing to younger generations today".

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