

Faith, sense of family drive Heartland Lutheran student to leadership role



Along with being heavily involved in the school's athletic program, Heartland Lutheran senior Meghann Uden is also the school's student council president.
Independent/Barrett Stinson

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Published: Sunday, January 11, 2009 10:48 PM CST

As far as 18-year-old Meghann Uden of Hastings is concerned, Heartland Lutheran High School is family.

And for Meghann and other students, faculty and staff at Heartland Lutheran, the secret of their intense loyalty to the school is a strong sense of family.

“We are such a smaller school compared to the other schools in Grand Island, so we are kind of like more of a family than a school,” she said.

Along with being active in both basketball and volleyball each of her four years at Heartland Lutheran, off the field Meghann is president of the student council.

Whether it's on or off the court, one thing that propels Meghann is the duty of leadership.

It was in her junior year that she got involved with the student council. She served as vice president.

“I think it's just kind of fun to be involved in school with stuff,” she said.

But with fewer than 70 students attending the school and 17 students in Meghann's senior class, getting involved at Heartland Lutheran is an ethic that's second nature to the students.

Meghann said the students connect well with one another.

“You'll see every single person every day in the hallways,” she said.

Going to a small school is something with which Meghann is quite familiar. In her eighth-grade class, there were four kids.

And Meghann said she doesn't feel like she has missed out associating with her peers by attending smaller schools.

“I like the small aspect of this school because you can be involved a lot more,” she said. “In the bigger schools sometimes it’s harder and more competitive to be involved in things.”

What compels Meghann to be involved is a sense of fulfillment that she’s helping out the school. After all, it’s family.

But as much a compelling factor as a sense of family, her faith also is a strong reason for her involvement.

“I have a strong sense of faith, but going to this school has made it grow by being surrounded by other Christian believers and by the teachers,” she said.

She also credited Heartland Lutheran Principal John Weber as an inspiration who has helped her to grow both as a person and in her faith.

“She (Meghann) is just a great leader for our school,” Weber said. “She has really taken it upon herself this year as president of student council to see that our student council continued to grow in what it did.”

Weber said Meghann was instrumental for Heartland Lutheran attending the state convention of student councils last year.

“She has gotten our student council to really be active and involved,” Weber said. “Each month we are doing something different. She is really doing a lot of work to make sure that future student councils are going to be really good.”

An important part of what Heartland Lutheran wants to instill in young people is being “good and positive leaders,” he said.

“Our kids have really risen to the challenge,” Weber said. “They really take things upon themselves. They really see the school is not just there to serve them, they serve the school and the community at large.”

What also impresses Weber about Meghann is her ability to adapt, especially in sports where she puts team ahead of individual recognition.

“She has a great attitude and a hard worker,” he said. “She is a great role model for the young kids.”

Meghann said she has also grown as a person since she started attending Heartland Lutheran.

“It has just helped me become a strong individual,” she said. “I know that I can stand up for what I believe.”

And that’s a strong component of leadership — being able to stand up for your beliefs and inspire others to act at the same time.

As a senior, Meghann also understands she has a responsibility to be a role model and mentor to the younger students, just like the older students were to her when she first came to Heartland Lutheran.

It’s part of the family ethos that runs strong at Heartland Lutheran, she said.

“It’s a fulfillment within yourself to help the school out any way that you can,” Meghann said.

As president of the student council, Meghann said one of her goals is to get the student body more involved in school activities, such as fundraisers for the school.

“Being part of the student council has given me a lot more responsibility,” she said. “I feel responsible if something needs to get done to make sure that it does get done.”

That responsibility, in return, allows her to strengthen her self-esteem and self-confidence — two crucial components of a strong leader.

Sometimes you can be a little taken aback as now people are looking to you to make decisions instead of looking to others to lead the way, she said.

“But it’s a good feeling,” Meghann said.