

By ROBERT PIERCE • Daily Leader

Developing life skills in teenagers was the idea, and some educators at Liberal High School were the brain child behind a program implemented to do just that two years ago.

Teen Leadership is a class in which students develop that characteristic, along with professional and business skills, and they likewise learn to develop a healthy self-concept, healthy relationships and an understanding of the concept of personal responsibility.

There are three sections of the Teen Leadership class at LHS, a course which goes in hand with USD 480's Capturing Kids Heart. Two of the sections are taught by Chris Perkins and one of them by Kathy Croy.

The class is taught for a semester, and the students are randomly chosen for the course. Each class consists of freshman through seniors, and students in Croy's class recently designed T-shirts which they believe best symbolizes the attitude of the class.

"The kids designed it," she said. "I had some anonymous donations given to me when I was talking to individuals about the class. The kids designed the shirts, and then, we had them made. It was all donations. They're called the Teen Cyclones."

Teen Leadership students voted on the theme, and Croy said the idea was all that of the class.

“I just said we need to design a shirt, and they took it from there,”

she said. “It’s 100 percent theirs.”

Croy said she has seen a lot of growth in her students.

“I’ve got a really awesome group of kids this year,” she said. “Mr.

Perkins has seen some things. We’ve had some teachers who have commented on their self-concepts, their self-esteem, and their speaking abilities have improved through these leadership qualities.”

Teen Leadership helps youth develop self-awareness, self-control, self-motivation and social skills, and Tony Graves, a freshman in the class, said the class is sound in what it is designed to teach.

“It’s been pretty good,” he said. “It benefits me. We’re doing better in groups. It helps me in school. It gets my grades better.”

Fellow freshman Christian Torres said he has also seen an improvement in his class work and social skills.

“I think the class has been good,” he said. “It helps me have better friends and good grades and become a better student.”

Junior Oscar Chavez said Teen Leadership likewise does well in one of its other goals – developing an understanding of principle-based decision making.

“I think the class has benefitted me by helping me out in my other classes, helping me think about the choices I make and just watching out for people I call my friends and getting along with people,” he said.

The course also develops an understanding of the principles of parenting, enabling youth to become better family members and citizens, and freshman Javier Medina said the class accomplishes this goal.

“It is real fun and awesome,” he said. “I’ve met new friends. It teaches us how to be better leaders. I think it’s a good class for us.”