

Willard is a small bedroom community nine miles Northwest of Springfield, Missouri. In a tiny building just south of the football field, stakeholders in the alternative high school are witnessing great things.

“Success is beginning to thrive,” said Zachariah Rippee, a six-year teacher in the program. “We are witnessing the fruits of intentional choices and changes.”

Success, that’s the program’s name, has not been immune to the effects of the *Great Resignation*. Last year the program lost four of six teachers. But, where some might see adversity, others see opportunity.

“We saw this as a time to begin again. Coach (Staci) Wattie had a vision. She wanted the program, and the building, to reflect the message in our hearts. She wanted to present one uniform statement to our students.”

You matter. You’re worthy. You’re loved.

“We started in June. We spent countless hours preparing the building.”

Success got a much-needed facelift. This included repainting the walls, inspirational quotes, new furniture, a care closet, and a calming room for dysregulated students.

“The first day was pretty special. We had spent weeks, months maybe, pouring our hearts into the space, and students walked in and saw that they were genuinely cared for. From that moment, the entire atmosphere of the building changed.”

Students began to take ownership of their opportunities. The JAG and Missouri Options classes requested to participate in the Homecoming Day Parade. They constructed a float, made signs, and high-fived hundreds of students throughout the community.

One Missouri Options student said, “This has been my best day at Willard.”

It doesn’t stop there. The Success Program, which offers direct instruction in core classes and an opportunity for students to rotate between the alternative school and the primary high school, is currently serving more students than it has in Coach Wattie’s past 11 years.

“We are serving roughly 100 students. Those 100 students utilize around 220 seats daily between core classes and courses like JAG and Missouri Options,” Wattie reports.

Last year Success saw 35 seniors graduate, roughly a tenth of Willard’s 2022 graduating class.

Several of those graduates have moved on to follow their paths to becoming active members of society.

“Last week, we were visited by two former students. One is a Private First Class in the U.S. Marine Corps. The other just got hired in our district as a custodian.”

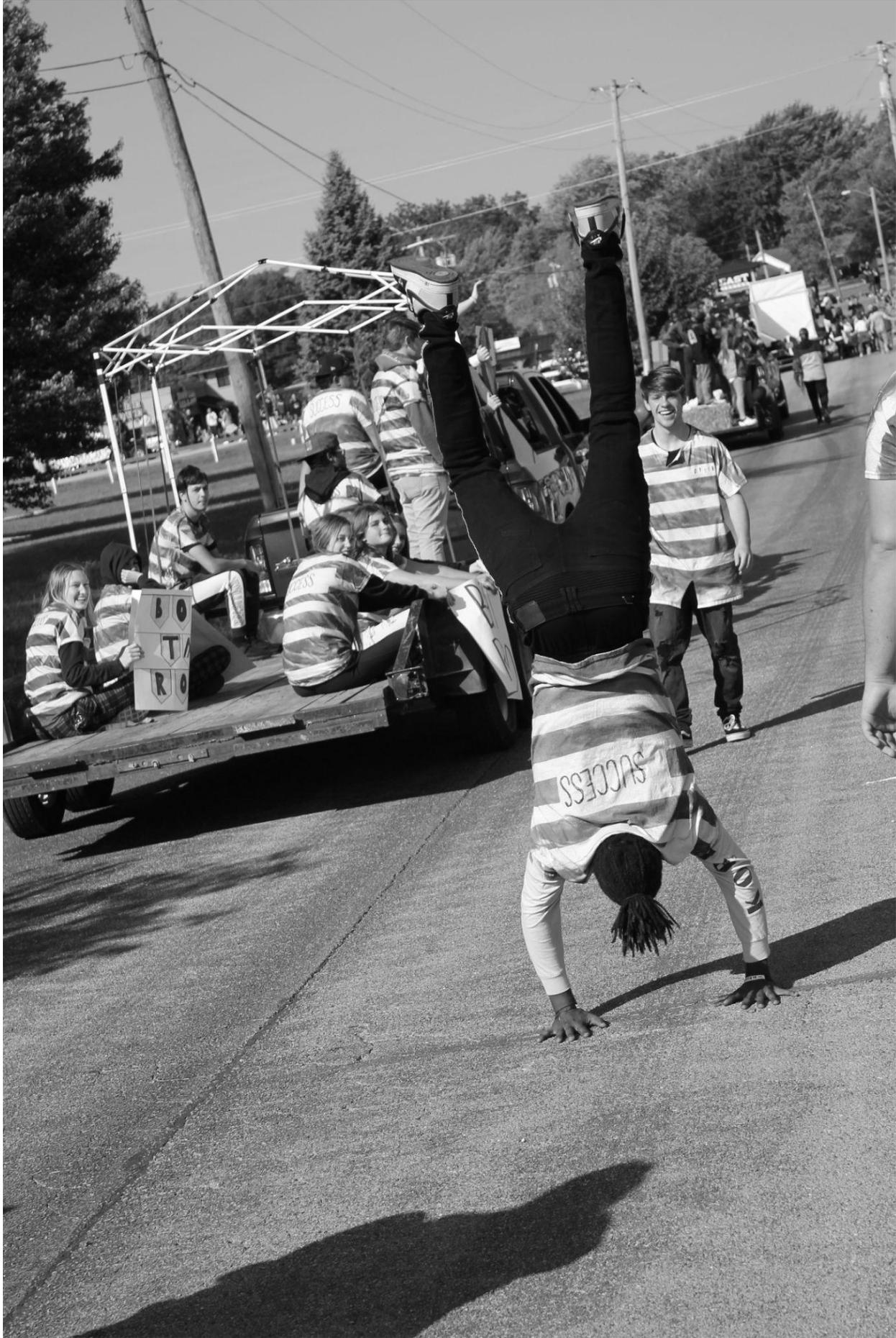
As the year unfolds, students at Success continue to stretch to meet new opportunities.

“We have started to mentor our middle-school at-risk students. We are so happy to see that program re-established. The JAG and MO-Opts students also plan a **NO VAPE NOVEMBER** campaign.”

When asked what stoked the fire of the Success Program, Rippee said,

“Everything began to tell the kids the same thing. Our actions, our words, our surroundings, and how we engage them all began to shout the same message. The message was a crucial part of Wattie’s vision.

Our students matter; they are worthy; they are loved. We are Success.”



Success is the sum

of small efforts

REPEATED...

#ymywyl





