Pennies collected by students add up at PS 60

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Children who helped collect pennies surround the "Penny Harvest Field" during its unveiling ceremony in this Monday, Dec. 10, 2007 file photo in New York. Four behemoth Consolidated Edison vacuum trucks were enlisted on Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2008 to suck up 300 tons of pocket change, dismantling Rockefeller Center's Penny Harvest Field exhibit. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

STATEN ISLAND, NY - GRANITEVILLE - Talk about children helping children - and making every penny count while doing so - we hear that youngsters will be the beneficiaries of this year's Penny Harvest Campaign at PS 60.

The school's students worked hard to collect pennies from friends, parents, classmates and family members. Classes competed against each other to see which one could bring in the most. The winning class went on a trip to Rockefeller Center, and the winning grade was given a no-homework night.

All told, the kids collected more than $2,500, putting PS 60 in the Top Five among Staten Island schools that participated in Penny Harvest this school year, according to third-grade teacher Lauren Richards, who coordinated the effort.

The total surprised even PS 60 Principal Bonnie Ferretti.

"Our parents and staff of PS 60 have always been very generous and caring whenever asked to donate to a cause, but this year, they far exceeded all expectations with our Penny Harvest campaign," she said. "We were touched when we saw even the youngest students lugging mountains of pennies to add to our Penny Harvest bags."
Once the pennies had been tallied, fifth-graders went online and researched charities. They made posters for each one and the students got to vote for their top choices.

In the end, the students decided the money would go to the Haiti Relief Fund, the Make A Wish Foundation, PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), The Smile Train, and to John Hudson Dilgen, the 8-year-old boy from Tottenville with a rare illness called EB, that causes blistering of the skin and internal organs.

Fourth- and fifth-grade Penny Harvest leaders got to present the checks to representatives from each charity recently during a schoolwide assembly. John Hudson attended to thank students himself.

For the Penny Harvest leaders, it was a lesson in teamwork and compassion.

"I learned that when you all come together and work as a team, you can accomplish many things," declared fifth-grader Stephanie Toma.

"The little things we do to help others can make a huge difference," said fifth-grader Julie Rose Rivera. "If we don't do this for others who are less fortunate than us, how can we expect people to do nice stuff for us?" she wondered.

Her classmate, Rebecca Aguilar, took a practical view. "I learned about 12 different charities and what they do," she said, "But I also learned that carrying 30 pounds of pennies down the stairs can be bad for your back."

SOURCE: