Students Learn and Become Empowered to Help Others Through Penny Harvest

Tuesday, March 23, 2010

A student from Shady Lane Elementary identifies an issue her class would like to address during a Penny Harvest student assembly.

Students, schools, and the community at large will all see big benefits from the millions of pennies gathered locally in a service learning program called the Penny Harvest. This school year nearly 7,500 elementary students from 19 Columbus and Worthington City schools are participating in the program. During the first phase of the program, the students went door to door connecting with neighbors, family and friends to gather more than 3 million pennies, for a grand total of $30,075.95! The students are now working to decide how to give back every penny they collected to address needs and issues in their local community. See Kids Dream, a local not for profit organization, brought the Penny Harvest to Columbus and the organization provides the funding, training, support and materials needed to run the program in the area schools.

Service learning programs like the Penny Harvest engage students and use community service as an educational strategy. Research has shown that students who participate in programs like the Penny Harvest benefit from higher academic achievement, increased self esteem and the development of research, organization, communication and leadership skills. As the students help others through community service during their formative years they develop generosity and moral character, and learn through hands-on application, the skills and responsibilities of democratic participation.

"The Penny Harvest program is more than just a civics lesson, the entire process empowers our children to be confident in themselves, compassionate to others and gives rise to tomorrow's leaders," said Bill Grindle, See Kids Dream executive director.

Raising money is just one phase of the year-long service project. Over the next couple of months, students all across our community, will come together to collaborate, debate and research community needs and connect with organizations in their community. They will then review proposals and award service and community grants from the monies they collected.
By the end of May, the students will give back all $30,000 of the funds they raised, to local community non-profit organizations and roll up their sleeves to get involved in neighborhood service projects. Schools and students will research and partner with nonprofits to learn more about specific needs, then plan and execute service projects to meet those needs.

The Penny Harvest is in its second year in Columbus. Thanks to a grant from the Columbus Foundation's J. Ray and Lillian W. Waller, and Richard C. and Manikin Kaufman Ninde funds and support from Crimson Cup, Telhio Credit Union and Huntington Bank, and donations from individuals in our community, the program has grown from seven schools last year to 19 schools this year. Last year local students raised over $15,000 which was use to award grants or complete service projects for 22 different organizations.

See Kids Dream was founded by Bill and Laura Grindle, parents of two elementary age children who are seeing the benefits of participating in the program. The couple had learned of the Penny Harvest's success in New York and spent more than four years trying to find a way to bring it to Columbus. In 2008 they founded See Kids Dream with support from a governing board of directors which includes executives from Huntington Bank, Capital Square Limited, Clearview Management Resources, Irvin Public Relations, Avatar Syndicate, Communica and Telhio Credit Union. See Kids Dream provides the Penny Harvest to area schools free of charge and they hope the student's success will inspire support from local donors to enable them to expand to additional schools and districts in the future. To learn more about See Kids Dream and how you can help bring the Penny Harvest to more schools and children in Columbus, visit www.SeeKidsDream.org