Holly Glen Elementary School recently presented two grant awards to local not-for-profit organizations, completing the school’s 2010 Penny Harvest Campaign. Students raised $1,704.21 through the school’s 2009-2010 Penny Harvest Campaign, collecting pennies and loose change to fund a student directed philanthropy program and service learning projects. The proceeds will be shared equally between the Avon Foundation Breast Cancer Fund and the Central & Southern New Jersey affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Fund for the Cure.

Student leadership selected the charities following a year long project, which included canvassing the entire student body for issues that are important to them, researching appropriate charities that address these issues and coming to consensus upon the selected issues and charities.

Issues identified by the student body spanned a wide range of topics, from disaster relief including Haiti, hunger relief, assistance to animals and health and human service needs. The student leadership ultimately selected breast cancer research and assistance due to the personal nature of the topic to the family of one of the student leaders.

During the school year, the students also collected health care and hygiene items for donation to support the people of Haiti following the earthquake. The students donated soap, washcloths, hand towels, nail clippers, tooth brushes, bandages and combs and assembled over 200 health care kits which were donated to the United Methodist Committee On Relief for shipment to the people of Haiti.

Founded in 1991, the Common Cents Penny Harvest grew from one child’s desire to feed the homeless. For the past 18 years, children between the ages of four and 14 have been converting their natural compassion for others into action by collecting pennies and turning those pennies into grants for community.

The Penny Harvest shows young people they have the ability to make the world a better place by introducing them to the power of philanthropy and service during their formative years.