P.S. 232 collects $8G in pennies

BY TONIA N. CIMINO

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The kids at P.S. 232 definitely have a “cents” of how to make the world a better place.

The 75 fifth-, sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders in Kids Who Care, a community service team, came in second place – citywide – in collecting change, primarily pennies, for Penny Harvest, the largest child philanthropy program in the United States.

With a grand total of $8,000 this year, P.S. 232 has finished in the top three for the last two years, said proud principal Lisa Josephson.

“Every year it grows and grows,” she said, commending the hard work of the students, parents and teachers, particularly Susan Vigliarola.

“Ms. V,” as she is affectionately called, is the school’s math coach and heads up Kids Who Care, devoting much of her own time to inspiring the students.

“[The program] is becoming so large,” said Josephson, noting that each year more and more students want to join. “A very big part of why this succeeds time after time is because of the dedication of Ms. V. She gives up so much of her own time and even opens up her home to the children in Kids Who Care.”

This year, for the very first time, the school hosted a ceremony at which a representative from Penny Harvest was present and checks were given to the numerous charities the students opted to help. These were:

● $500 to go toward helping earthquake-ravaged Haiti;

● $500 for Smile Train, an international charity that provides cleft lip and cleft palate surgery to children in need;

● $500 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation;

● $500 for the food pantry of St. Vincent de Paul Society of St. Helen;

● $750 for the South Queens Boys & Girls Club;
● $750 for People Need Caring, who will match $500 to go toward building an orphanage in Colombia;

● $500 for the North Shore Animal League;

● $1,500 in essential items for the St. Fidelis Mother & Child Residence (the kids went to BJs and Target to shop for the goods on Tuesday, June 1); and

● $750 used to purchase DVD players and other items for bed-ridden veterans at the NY Harbor Health Care Community Living Center in St. Albans.

“P.S. 232 has been so incredible to me that you’ve given me money three years in a row,” said Leo Compton, executive director of operations for the South Queens Boys & Girls Club.

Vigliarola’s colleague, Jim Cameron, who teaches sixth grade, was crowned “Penny Harvest King” because his class collected the most change.

He pointed out that the staff raised an additional $700 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation and that the Polar Bear Club in Long Beach, of which he is a member, collected $600 for Beat the Streets, a program “to expand and develop wrestling in the New York City Metropolitan area from the youth through the Olympic level.”

A very humble Vigliarola thanked her fellow teachers and said that Penny Harvest encourages kids to be a part of society and teaches them that they can change the world – cent by cent.

SOURCE: