Pupils find giving won't cost a pretty penny
Cent by cent, Veeder students collect more than $2,000 for charities

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COLONIE -- Students at Veeder Elementary School are getting a lesson in philanthropy.

The students spent six weeks collecting more than $2,000 in pennies. Then they made quilt squares depicting what they thought was important in their community. Using those squares, students then decided what community charities should get their money.

The contributions will help everything from retraining pit bulls to be therapy dogs to a camp for children and their families dealing with life-threatening illnesses. Some of the money will go toward the Children's Hospital at Albany Medical Center.

On Friday, Danny Rossetti, 9, told students and parents that the hospital provided good care to his sister Sophie, a first-grader who died of leukemia in January.

"The money will go toward fun activities for children when they are being treated for serious illness," he said.

"Sophie made a lot of friends in the hospital," said Toshiko Nanoto, child-life specialist at the hospital. "This will help Sophie's friends feel better."

All students in the school donated to the effort, called Penny Harvest. Twenty-five children were selected to lead the effort to pick the charities that would receive the money.

"I liked the feeling of helping the community," Danny, a fourth-grader, said.

Ten-year-old Crystal Chonou, another fourth-grader, said she liked having a chance to do a good deed for other children and people in need. "It felt good because it seemed we were helping people," she said.

The students presented checks to the five organizations in a packed assembly Friday.

"When I saw all these people come today, I just thought 'Wow,'" Danny said. "I just think we did a really good job."

Another of the charities that benefited was the Donna M. Crandall Foundation, which assists people with cystic fibrosis and their families. The children chose the foundation because a student in the school has cystic fibrosis.
David Crandall, the foundation's president, said he was touched by the gift.

"There is the monetary value, but what means more to me is the fact all these students, teachers and parents in the Veeder community were willing to help and contribute to people they don't even know to make their lives a little bit better," he said.

Some of the money went to Out of the Pits, an organization that takes pit bulls and turns them into therapy dogs. The animals come from the police, shelters and donations.

"This means a lot to us," said Cydney Cross, president and co-founder. The organization has spayed or neutered 230 pit bulls, she said, and the money will help it do more.

The Double H Ranch in Lake Luzerne, which provides a camp for seriously ill children, also received a contribution.

Tracy Krom, a teaching assistant, and Sarah Norton, a special education teacher, oversaw the effort.

The children conducted interviews, watched videos, and gathered information about the foundations. Ten students went on a Saturday to visit Peaceful Acres in Pattersonville, a farm that brings together abused people and animals that received a contribution.

"We want to teach them it's not just money," Norton said. "You give your time, your treasure and your talent."

Krom said the children saw that a small effort can provide a big help.

"Something as small as a penny can turn into so much," she said.

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