

Haiti Fundraisers Successful Across the Northwest School Division February 17, 2010

Schools across the Northwest School Division have staged successful fundraisers recently and were able to present the Canadian Red Cross and other NGOs working in Haiti with cheques totaling approximately \$30,000 recently.

Red Cross representative Laura Beddome thanked the students for “making a world of difference to the people of Haiti.” As she commented to the students, the cheques were a valuable gift because “anyone can unexpectedly find himself or herself in great need -anyone of us, at any time, anywhere in the world.”

She further commented that the donations from the schools were inspiring because “anyone – any single person- upon seeing a need in others can do things to make a difference,” and she thanked the students profusely noting that the funds they raised “would be used to help the Haitian people both now and in the future.”

Beddome talked about the 10,000 volunteers with the Haitian Red Cross and the 500 international Red Cross volunteers who were working to distribute supplies including food and clean water, helping with search and rescue efforts, facilitating the provision of emergency medical care, and acting to provide emergency shelter for people who had lost their homes. She noted that to date this has been the largest emergency response in history – larger even than the Tsunami relief efforts.

In the majority of schools fundraising activities began because students, hearing of the devastation in their classrooms or through the media, asked the question: “What can we do to help?”

In answer to that question students at J.H. Moore Elementary School in Lashburn were soon trying to fill a large water jug with cash. At Greenacre School (a very small elementary school in a small community) students came together and held a bake sale, a used toy sale, and Bucket Buster draws (prizes for which were donated by schools in Meadow Lake). At Ratushniak Elementary in Maidstone they staged a ‘Change for Haiti’ dance with a Caribbean theme, and at Lakeview Elementary they’ve run a bake sale, held candy jar guesses and staged a ‘Cash for Hats’ day in an ongoing campaign.

“Children have opened their hearts,” said teacher Pam Russell. “They’ve emptied their piggybanks, donated all of their Christmas money, brought containers of coins they had saved for spending money for a family holiday, approached relatives and friends for donations as well as doing extra chores to earn money.”

At Glaslyn Central the grade 12 boys cheerfully donated the hair from their legs in exchange for a lot of cash. The Citizens of Tomorrow student group in St. Walburg held a coin drive with proceeds going to both Haiti and other needy countries throughout the world. At Carpenter High

in Meadow Lake the SRC hosted a Hats for Haiti event and matched the amount raised with a donation from their own 'Project Freechild' while in Edam the staff and students hosted a talent night (14 different acts) and silent auction (85 items). In Meadow Lake the students at Gateway School have produced and sold crafts, run two bake sales and held a 'Hats for Haiti' day, while at Jonas Samson School bake sales, lunch sales, hat days and generous donations from the SADD group helped to bring in a lot of donations.

The students and community in Neilburg responded enthusiastically to school secretary Cathy Ducherer's suggestion that they host a potluck supper. Used successfully in the past in Neilburg, the fundraiser involves people bringing their favourite dish and a donation as an entrance fee. Combined with a bake sale run by the grade 5/6 class, the evening was a great success as people from Neilburg and Marsden opened their wallets as big as their hearts. At Lashburn High School teacher, Don Wheler, described how they settled on a goal for each student to find pledges totaling \$50.00 in a friendly intramural competition based on the themes of water, medical aid, food and shelter.

"Children have big hearts," he said, "and fundraising campaigns are an invitation to other people to donate to a disaster. The campaigns become a vehicle for people's charity and generosity. All we do is make it easy for people to do something that they already believe is the right thing to do."

When asked to comment on the success of the division campaigns Wheler reflected on how schools teach charity: "We look at it as an educational opportunity – a way to not just make our students aware of the disaster and the tragedy of this event, but also of the fact that people are suffering all over the world at any given time. By doing this we can help our students to see that this thing 'charity' is not something that should only be done when we know the people personally or for the victims of disasters, but rather that we should be charitable – that it should be a part of our character, a part of our inner nature, a part of ourselves."