

SNAPSHOTS



Irvine police officer Rick Gramer plays games with carnival-goers.

COURTESY PHOTOS



Members of the Team Kids Leadership Team at Woodbury Elementary host their game to support their chosen charity, the Irvine Public Schools Foundation.

Team Kids Challenge raises money, awareness

By JULIE HUDASH
FOR THE IRVINE WORLD NEWS

Editor's note: Students from Woodbury Elementary School recently raised \$800 for the Irvine Public Schools Foundation by holding a carnival. The city will match the funds raised, for a total of \$1,600 for the foundation. Julie Hudash, founder and CEO of Team Kids, had this information to share:

Heavy winds caused a last minute change of plans, as fifth and sixth graders at Woodbury Elementary scurried to relocate their carnival games from the outdoor playground and into the indoor multipurpose room. As games were reassembled, younger students rushed in, carnival tickets in hand, to enjoy a celebration hosted entirely by the Team Kids Leadership Team.

The Leadership Team is made up fifth and sixth graders who gave up their lunch recess weekly, for a month, to inspire the entire student body to surpass four weekly service goals, and to plan the closing carnival celebration.

The Dec. 16 carnival capped off the month-long Team Kids Challenge Program and raised more than \$800 in just over an hour. Every penny will go to the Irvine Public Schools Foundation, the

charity voted on by the children themselves. The funds raised at the carnival will be matched by a grant from the city of Irvine, for a total of \$1,600 raised by the students, said Wendy Bakota, development director for the foundation.

"The children's donation is a great start to our music campaign which will help provide music instruction and instruments to all students in Irvine elementary schools," Bakota said.

The students at Woodbury learned a lot about critical community issues, and most importantly learned that they are just the right size and age to make a tremendous impact in the lives of those in need.

The students spent the first week learning about literacy, and the importance for all kids to have books. As a result, 1,600 books were collected and will be distributed through the Early Literacy Program of Orange County to children at low-income schools and clinics.

The second week focused on Orange County's homelessness issue. Students filled two 15-passenger vans with gently used toys and clothes to support the homeless and working poor through Santa Ana's Southwest Community Center. Students teamed up with Irvine's Families Forward for a week, three bringing in

the food "they like to eat" to fill three large containers to help feed the hungry over the holidays. Collectively, the Woodbury students' donations made to the community are valued at more than \$6,000.

Our goal is to inspire young people to become responsible citizens with a passion for community service. Team Kids' programs provide children the opportunity to look beyond their own needs and help others, while also teaching values and skills that will help kids make good choices in their own lives.

More than 45,000 students in Irvine, Newport Beach and Rancho Santa Margarita schools have participated in the Team Kids Challenge since 2001, donating more than \$400,000 of valued resources to charitable causes. As always, to honor the philanthropic spirit of the kids, 100 percent of all youth-generated donations are passed through to commu-

nity charities. Team Kids also engages students outside school walls, in causes on a local national and international level. For example, Team Kids LemonAID for Japan Relief mobilized kids from Hawaii to Maryland following the recent disaster in Japan. Young entrepreneurs raised more than \$43,000, in just 20 days, selling LemonAID – one sticky quarter at a time.

The secret to Team Kids' success? A close collaboration with the Irvine Unified School District, the City of Irvine, Irvine Police Department, Orange County Fire Authority, local businesses, and most importantly our youngest citizens who are so proud to make a positive contribution to their community.

Want to get involved? Team Kids LemonAID will take place over MLK Day Weekend on Jan. 14 to 16, to support schools' PTA/PTOs and the Orange County United Way. Visit www.teamkids.org for more information.



Kids line up to play the Recycle Game, and win prizes for successfully throwing recyclable items into their appropriate bins.