

We have just over 10,000 students in our school district, and over the course of a school year, it is amazing how much they do, in so many different ways, to give back to the community.

I know it seems like there are a lot of fundraisers going on all the time. There are. But many times the students are working to raise money so they can turn right around and donate it to a worthy cause.

The amounts can be impressive. Last year, for example, our Intermediate School students raised more than \$14,000 for autism research by holding a fund-raising walk. They just held the walk again this month and have already raised more than \$10,000, with more still coming in.

It's not always cash that students collect, however. Earlier this year our Middle School students organized a canned food drive, and delivered thousands of cans to the Fairfield Food Pantry, in one of the largest donations it had ever received of that type. The work our students do can range from local to global. This year a Middle School student and some of her friends made bracelets to sell, and donated the money to relief efforts in Darfur, the war-torn area of Sudan.

Our younger students help too, all the way down to kindergarten. East Elementary jumped rope to raise money for the American Heart Association. Central Elementary helped the family of one its students who lost all their possessions in a fire. North Elementary students collected more than 2,000 non-perishable food items for the food pantry. West Elementary, for more than ten years, has held an event called the "Souper Bowl" to raise money for the food pantry. South Elementary also raises funds for the American Heart Association by jumping rope. And last week our kindergartners auctioned off cakes their parents made to raise money for autism research. I'm sure you've noticed, the food pantry and autism research are two of the most popular worthy causes for our students.

I've cited just one or two examples for each school. There are so many more, even just from this current school year. Wear Red for Heart Day. Toys for Tots. Collecting hats and mittens for families in need. Bringing in pennies for Unicef. A raffle to support the Make-a-Wish Foundation. There are many more.

Our oldest students, at the Freshman School and High School, lead the way, not only in raising money for charity but also in community service projects. They've led toy drives for needy children and worked with the Cincinnati Cyclones hockey team to raise money for children with cleft palates. They tutor younger students in our district and serve as Big Brothers and Big Sisters. They volunteer at the Cincinnati Reds summer baseball camp. In the fall they held a benefit volleyball game to raise money for breast cancer research. They adopted a family at Christmas.

In fact, tonight our boys volleyball team is hosting a fundraiser for CancerFree Kids at their final home game of the season, against Edgewood High School. They've been

selling “Support T-Shirts” for \$10 (every dollar will be donated to CancerFree Kids). Hopefully there will many people wearing the shirts at the game, at 7 p.m. at the high school. Please come out and support them.

In all of this, almost always, our students meet, plan, and work before school, after school, during lunch, at night and on the weekends. We work hard to make sure that these efforts, while so very worthwhile, still don’t take away from class time. (We do though, sometimes find ways to tie their work to what they’re studying in class.)

We are very proud of all the students in our district, and how much they give to others.

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