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School Bell: Antioch students collect food for the needy

By Trine Gallegos
For the Contra Costa Times

Posted: 12/08/2010 03:49:33 PM PST

Updated: 12/08/2010 03:49:33 PM PST

John Muir Elementary certainly has the can-do spirit. As in, they sure know how to collect cans of food for those in need.

Before the Thanksgiving break, teacher Kris Deacon said students throughout the Antioch school pulled together to donate 1,000 pounds of food to the Contra Costa and Solano Food Bank.

For each grade, student council representatives labeled barrels with colorful signs and held a friendly competition among the classes. The reps visited each classroom and "explained to the younger students how they could help others in need," Deacon said. "They made wonderful posters about the drive and plastered windows, doors and walls with them."

The student reps also held two before-school rallies to increase awareness, and garner enthusiasm with cheers that included, "We have the plans to bring some cans," "Get in the mood to donate food" and "Please strive to join our drive."

The fifth-graders filled their 55-gallon barrel to the brim and also filled a large box with rice, pasta and cereals. The second-grade barrel was nearly to the top, along with a box of other dry food goods.

"I think all the children who brought in food felt that they were simply helping a kid or a family who were less fortunate than themselves," said Deacon of the three-week drive.

WINTER CONCERT: Carmen Dragon Elementary School in Antioch got into the holiday spirit with its

annual Winter Concert on Dec. 2. This year, there was a bit of a twist, however. Principal Elyse Belanger, a former music teacher, joined in the fun performing on violin with the student musicians and helping out with some musical direction while teacher DeeDee Degering played the piano.

Students from both the beginning and advance strings sections and concert bands performed, and a number of students performed duets and solos.

BOOK 'EM: Several area schools host book fairs this holiday season at Antioch's Barnes & Noble. During these designated dates, schools are given a portion of the store's profits.

The dates and schools are: Dec. 12 for Antioch High's marching band; Dec. 13 for the Delta Council PTA; Dec. 14 for Oakley's Freedom High; and Dec. 15 for Antioch's Deer Valley High.

An additional draw for the Dec. 13 fair will be the appearance Trisha and John Parker, authors of "The Best of Our Lives: Sharing the Secrets of a Healthy and Happy Retired Life." They will be at the store at 6:30 p.m. to sign books and discuss their book. On Dec. 15, East Bay resident Sarah Sundin will sign and talk about her book "Distant Melody" at 5 p.m. For more information about these events, call 925-978-1053.

BUY THE BOOK: Belshaw Elementary has been turning spare change into books. The Antioch school's PTO started its Bucks for Books in

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September, and has already doled out hundreds to the staff, who have turned around and bought hundreds of books with the money. The simple concept -- share your change (or dollars, eh?), and 100 percent of the money goes to buying books for the 55-year-old school's library and classrooms.

The school participates in Accelerated Reader, which promotes the joy and importance of reading while awarding the students for successfully reading and passing tests on books. The Bucks for Books plans to increase the choices of AR reads for the students.

The fundraiser continues through the end of the school year, but if it's a last-minute write-off you're looking for, you can donate before the holiday break. For more information, call 925-706-4140 or 925-997-3453.

CLOSE, BUT "...: Delta Vista Middle School was shooting for perfect attendance on Nov. 17. Although, there was a strong showing, the Oakley school fell a bit short of the tough-to-get goal. On that day 16 students and 1 teacher didn't make it. "It was a bit disappointing but we'll be trying again," said Principal Greg Hetrick. Considering the school has 906 students plus 42 teachers and 30 support staff, only missing the mark by 17 is still impressive. "I'm looking to do another day in January," said Hetrick. Here's wishing them a perfect day.

"School Bell" is written by Trine Gallegos. If you have news you'd like to share in the column, e-mail her at trineg@att.net. You can also reach Judith Prieve at jprieve@bayareanewsgroup.com.

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