

St. Michael School in Independence, Ohio Enthusiastic About its Newly Formed K-Kids Club

St. Michael School Principal Miss Michelle Nowakowski was a guest speaker at the local Independence, Ohio Kiwanis Club meeting this past fall. The school was interested in developing a partnership with the Kiwanis and extending help of its student body in anyway the Kiwanis needed that help. When third grader, Elena Paparizos, heard about the K-Kids Club, she immediately wanted to help her school start the club. She came up with all kinds of ideas on what the club would do for the school and community and approached Principal Miss Nowakowski with the idea. Miss Nowakowski was very enthusiastic and supported Elena as she then decided to put together a Powerpoint presentation for the President of the Kiwanis Club, Ed Chrzanowski. After she presented that to the president, he asked Elena to give the presentation to the entire Kiwanis Club the following Monday night. The Kiwanis embraced the idea and decided to sponsor the school and approved the club's formation.

The school then planned a Kick-Off Assembly on February 28 to announce the new club, and its mission and goals to the students. More than 25 students signed up in the first week! The club has had two meetings and already has helped out at the Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast and the annual Easter Egg Hunt.

The school planned several events for National Library Week, the week of April 16th. The club had a book donation drive for the entire school and both children and adult books were collected and donated to St. Boniface School in Cleveland, the University Settlement (which the Independence Kiwanis has partnered with) as well as other local community groups in need of books.

On Tuesday, April 17, the club invited local librarians to the school for a breakfast and ceremony where the Mayors of Independence and Brecksville presented proclamations declaring that day "Local Librarian Day" in their communities. The entire school created Thank You cards, placemats, and gave the librarians corsages. Pastor of St. Michael Church Fr. Pete Colletti also did a special blessing. During the week, the school also invited "Celebrity Readers" from the community to read to the students.

The group had their first fundraising event at a local ice cream store, Coldstone Creamery, as well as attended the Kiwanis Annual Fishing Derby in May. They also planned an American Flag Presentation of two local soldiers who flew a flag in the Middle East on behalf of the children at St. Michael School for their support and prayers. The K-Kids and entire school honored these soldiers as they presented this keepsake flag to the school. The event gained attention of Cleveland's daily paper *The Plain Dealer* with a front page story and photo.

This past summer, K-Kids hosted a stand at one of the City of Independence's summer concerts to raise money for the group. In September, they participated in the St. Michael Day Festival with a fishing booth.

Along with a new Independence Kiwanis president, Marilyn Senick, came the new school year bringing an amazing 40 members to the KKids Club! And it continues to grow!

In October, the K-Kids collected money for the UNICEF Foundation for Swazi children in Africa and raised more than \$260 to help pay for medical supplies and food. Kiwanis has been supporting this organization for years and students at the high school level in the Builders Club have become ambassadors to Africa to support this cause.

K-Kids made beautiful placemats for the residents of Mt. Alverna Nursing Home in Parma for Thanksgiving. They also made Christmas ornaments for the soldiers in Afghanistan along with Christmas cards. The Independence Kiwanis sent the ornaments along with a Christmas tree and lights to help brighten the holidays for our troops.

The Kiwanis Christmas dinner was a little more jolly this year thanks to the members of the St. Michael KKids who sang Christmas Carols prior to their dinner.

Another holiday community service project the KKids sponsored was a collection of coats for the Coats for Kids campaign. The barrel in the school hallway was overflowing with coats that were given to children in need.

Upcoming plans for the rest of the school year include volunteering at the Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast, helping with the Kiwanis Easter Egg Hunt, planning a Librarian's Day Breakfast for National Library Week, helping at the Fishing Derby and Chicken BBQ, and making Get Well Books for the Children's Hospital. Two additional community service projects will include collecting notebooks and pencils for the children in Afghanistan as well as collecting baseball gloves for the Cleveland Baseball Federation in partnership with Yours Truly Restaurant. The gloves will go to the boys and girls in inner city to use at their baseball fields.

The school is overwhelmed by the wonderful community service ideas that the students are developing along with the strong parental support. "This is a wonderful opportunity to teach our students the qualities of being a leader as well as the importance of giving back to their community... in their own special way," said Principal Miss Nowakowski.

Plans are underway to develop a St. Michael School Builder's Club for grades 5 -8 for the beginning of the 2008-09 school year.