

Community Service at Hilldale

By Rob Baker



Webster's dictionary defines altruism as an "unselfish interest in the welfare of others." The concept of altruism is something not taught at most schools, especially at the elementary level; however, Hilldale School not only teaches our students about the concept, but in fact encourages participation in a diversity of projects to help many needy organizations.

Hilldale's students have long been involved in helping out in the community on a once-yearly basis. However, last year a few of our students from India were directly impacted when their extended families were affected by the giant December 2004 tsunami. The Hilldale School Student Council decided to hold three bake sales, with the profits all going to the American Red Cross Tsunami Disaster Fund. That project's success and personalization led teachers and students to discuss the idea of increasing the number of community service projects in which the students could actively participate. A Jump-Rope-a-Thon for the American Heart Association was organized in which students collected pledges based upon the time of continuous rope jumping. Our small school of 54 students raised a whopping \$1,874!

This academic year our Student Council has actively taken the initiative to organize and participate in many different community service projects to benefit worthwhile organizations.

Early in the year, they had two car washes to benefit the American Red Cross Hurricane Katrina effort. The car wash raised \$220, and, coupled with a matching gift from one parent's company, they doubled the gift to \$440.

Next, our students collected non-perishable food for the Second Harvest Food Bank in downtown San Francisco. They filled up four large, 55- gallon collection bins full of food for the holiday season!

Then, for the tenth year, we participated in the St. Jude Research Hospital's Math-a-thon. Students collected pledges based upon the correct number of math problems completed. Our students not only helped this research hospital with a financial contribution, but helped themselves by practicing and improving their math skills!

During the Christmas season, our students collected a very large box of new toys for the Daly City Fire Department, who distributed them to needy children who would otherwise not have had Christmas presents.

This spring, the Student Council sponsored a blanket drive for the Sacred Heart Community Service Center in San Jose. A large box of blankets were donated to this shelter in February to help the homeless in San Jose.

On April 6th, our students will again participate in the Jump-Rope-a-thon for the American Heart Association. We hope to raise over \$2000 this year.

Houston Garcia, this year's Student Council president, should especially be commended for leading our student body in these six community service projects this year, and his fellow officers and all of those who have helped out should be thanked, as well. Through such projects, Hilldale's students gain perspective by learning that there are less fortunate people in our local, state, national, and international community. That they decide to actively do something to assist these people and programs in need at such a young age is a testimony of their strength of character and the school's efforts to foster this altruistic attitude.