

Clarksville students take Oprah-esque approach to charity

Thanks to a lot of hard work, ingenuity and goodwill, fifth-graders at St. Louis School in Clarksville have transformed a \$300 gift from their teacher into a \$1,015 outreach campaign that is touching lives in their community, across the nation and around the world.

For a Lenten project, Kate Douglass gave each of her fifth-grade religion students \$10 and asked them to donate it to a charity of their choice.

Determined to have an even bigger impact, the students went to work promoting a bake sale, asking for contributions, doing extra chores and selling homemade items to friends and family - more than tripling the original contribution.

The project ended April 20 with children turning over their money and writing letters to 19 charities explaining why they chose to donate to their causes.

"I was so thrilled by their response," said Ms. Douglass, noting that she tried the project last year but it was mostly limited to students distributing the \$10 they were given originally.

"It was really touching to see them going the extra mile doing so many things to raise extra money," she said.

Colette McGarvey, an 11-year-old fifth-grader, joined forces with two friends to sew and sell "cooling scarves" used by athletes to help keep from overheating. They sold 40 of the neck garments, raising \$200.

"Working on this project made me realize how lucky we are," said Colette, who donated her proceeds to the American Heart Association and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. "It helped my faith."

Zachary Romer, a 10-year-old fifth-grader, joined Colette and other classmates in working on the group bake sale that garnered each of the 30 students in class an

extra \$10. He also searched his room for money, donating the \$15 he found. Zachary's mother doubled her son's final contribution.

"I wanted to make a difference in our society," said Zachary, whose donation benefited the Mercy Health Clinic in Maryland. "Now I have a bigger heart to give more."

Oprah Winfrey's "Big Give" television program was one of the inspirations for Ms. Douglass' outreach project.

"I couldn't do it on that grand of a scale," she said. "Clearly, I'm no Oprah, but this is something that the kids were excited about."

The project helped remind students that reaching out to others is a central component of their faith, Ms. Douglass said.

"All year long, we talk about how they can live a Catholic life by helping others and making a change in the world and showing Christ's love through their actions," she said. "They definitely accomplished that."

Some of the other charities that benefited from the school's generosity include the Howard County Animal Control Shelter, the Animal Welfare Society of Howard County, St. Jerome's Head Start in Baltimore and an orphanage in Russia.

What would you do for others with \$100?

Do you think you could take \$100 and turn it into \$200, \$1,000 or even more to help others? The Catholic Review is giving \$100 to three readers and challenging them to grow it into as much as they can to benefit a favorite charity or people in need.

Write to us and tell us in 300 words or less how you would grow \$100 and what you plan to do with the money you raise. The three most creative entries will be awarded \$100 each, and The Catholic Review will follow up with a story about how your plans were enacted.

Send entries no later than May 19 to: The Catholic Review, "Outreach Contest," c/o George Matysek, P.O. Box 777, Baltimore, MD 21203.