

## Elementary students recognized for their charitable achievements

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*Students from Stewart Ave. Elementary show their wheel of caring and explain how they decided to give away their Penny Harvest funds.*

How would you help others in need in your community if you had 3 million pennies to give away? That is what the student from 19 elementary schools in Columbus and Worthington City Schools had to decide recently. The students participated in a year-long service learning program called the Penny Harvest this school year. The students, their families and several leaders in our community came together at year end event called the Power of the Penny to celebrate and recognize the difference they made in Central Ohio.

Through the Penny Harvest the students make connections in their community and better understand the needs that exist. The program teaches students to work together and empowers them to make a difference while learning more about themselves and others. It uses community service as an educational strategy. Research has shown that students who participate in programs like the Penny Harvest benefit from higher academic achievement, increased self esteem and the development of research, organization, communication and leadership skills.

At the beginning of the school year the students discussed community issues they would like to address and they assembled the issues on a wheel, called the Wheel of Caring. Then they started penny collections going door-to-door in their neighborhoods to gather spare change. When the collections were completed, the students reviewed the issues on their Wheels of Caring and collaborated to conduct research and learn more about the needs they identified. They went online, made phone calls, interviewed neighbors and invited leaders from local non-profit organizations to come to their schools to talk with them. After they completed their research they faced the challenge of making the hard decisions of how to give back every penny of the money they raised. In many cases these decision were difficult and they lead to some passionate





discussions with students lobbying in their schools to win votes for the issue and organization they cared about. Ultimately through a democratic process the students voted on how to give away their funds and they also decided to take part in volunteer service projects.

At the Power of the Penny event the students from each school made table top presentations to share their achievements and discuss their community service projects. Several community leaders were invited to talk with the students and recognize their contribution to the community including: Doug Kridler, Columbus Foundation, Iris Cooper, Ohio Department of Development, Dr. Gene Harris, Columbus City Schools, Stacy Perkins, Columbus Parent Magazine and Jennifer Best a Worthington City Schools, Board Member.

The community leaders were asked share their observations with everyone who attended. Each talked about how impressed they were with the leadership and compassion expressed by the students. They were also impressed by the critical thinking, research skills and team work they witnessed among the students.

Dr. Harris shared that one of the students she spoke with at Devonshire Elementary said participating the Penny Harvest helped her to realize she "wanted to become an entrepreneur." Dr. Harris asked her what she meant and the young girls stated she "wanted to start her own not-for profit business to help people when she grew up."

The Power of the Penny culminates the Penny Harvest year. The program is in its second year in central Ohio. It is provided to schools by a local non-profit organization called See Kids Dream. While the entire program is student lead, a teacher or teachers in each school volunteer to support the student leaders who run the program. See Kids Dream provides the training, materials and the year-long support needed to run the Penny Harvest.

See Kids Dream was able to support the 19 schools that ran the Penny Harvest this school year thanks to a grant from the Columbus Foundation's J. Ray and Lillian W. Waller, and Richard C. and Manikin Kaufman Ninde funds, the Easton Community Foundation and support from Crimson Cup, Telhio Credit Union, Weltman Weinberg & Reiss, Huntington Bank, as well as donations from individuals in our community. The organization hopes the student's success will inspire support from other local donors to enable expansion to additional schools and districts in the future Bill Grindle the organization's executive director shared that "See Kids Dream does not charge schools for the support and materials they provide to run the Penny Harvest service learning program and additional funding will be critical to maintain and expand the program". To learn more about See Kids Dream and how you can help bring the Penny Harvest to more schools and children in Columbus, visit [www.SeeKidsDream.org](http://www.SeeKidsDream.org).

SOURCE: <http://columbusparent.com/live/content/philanthropy/stories/2010/06/penny-harvest-honor.html?sid=107>

