

Three middle-schools vying for ‘dough’ in ‘Pennies for Pizza’ charity drive

Written by By Chrissy Largo Sun Correspondent
Friday, 05 February 2016 04:10



Imagine being able to duct tape your middle school principal to a wall. Would you do it, especially if all it took was some loose change? Well, students at Chief Manuelito Middle School are competing for that rare opportunity as they participate in a month-long charity drive called,

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"Pennies for Pizzas," to help raise money for local and national organizations.

The Gallup Middle School and JFK Middle School are also a part of the charity drive held for the duration of February. Each school is responsible for raising money for different organizations of their choice and has the option of offering fun incentives for students.

The goal is for each school within each grade level to collect as many pennies as they can. The grade level at each school that raises the most money will win a pizza party for their entire class.

For Chief Manuelito Middle School, who recently received a "B" Grade from the New Mexico Public Education Department, the students decided that their sixth grade class will donate to the Gallup Community Pantry, their seventh grade class will donate to St. Jude Children's Hospital, and their eighth grade will donate to the Wounded Warriors Project.

Ida Mangum, chairperson for the Advisory School Council at CMMS, and creator of "Pennies for Pizza," said this is the first year that all three schools will be a part of the charity drive and she is hoping that this fun event will become an annual affair.

"It is a friendly competition but it is also teaching the kids to raise money for charities," she said. "At the end, when all of it is done, Mr. Wargo (Principal Steven Wargo) is going to let six kids tape him to the wall with duct tape. We actually convinced Mr. Garcia, who is the Dean of Students for Chief Manuelito, to also participate to be duct taped."

Wargo simply stated that kids need to learn that it's good to give back to the community and to give back to the less fortunate. Also, he said that it is creating a healthy competition amongst other schools but at the same time, raising money for a good cause.

"This was really a good idea to tie in community service and try to create something fun in the middle of the school year," he said. "February is really kind of the doldrums of the school year. The weather is kind of hit-and-miss and we are five or six weeks away from spring break and we are five or six weeks away from having winter break. It is a good time of year to do

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something fun for the kids.”

CMMS students who donate quarters or larger amounts of money will be eligible for weekly raffle prizes by receiving a ticket for each donation. The drawing will be held every Friday. If their ticket gets pulled, students are eligible to win prizes such as movie tickets, passes to Skate Connection, free bowling at Gal-a-Bowl, gift cards to Amazon, iTunes, and local restaurants.

Donations from students will take place during their first and second lunch hours and some sixth grade teachers are collecting donations in their classrooms. However, it is during the busiest time of the day, lunch hour that three big, nicely-decorated pickle buckets were transformed into penny collectors, so students are able to donate.

Janel Lomasney, 14, an eighth-grade student, who has been attending CMMS since she was in the sixth grade, donated to the charity drive.

“I donated to ‘Pennies for Pizza’ because other people need things that they don’t have right now. I wanted to help out and just to see what I could do for them,” she said.

As for Gallup Middle School, with about 435 students, roughly about 150 per grade level, Principal Carrie Lovato, said that her students are committed to donating to two organizations, the Veterans Helping Veterans and the American Cancer Society.

GMS students will be collecting donations during their first hour classes and prize drawings will be held on Fridays to those that give more than just a penny value.

“My student’s are really excited about it,” she said. “I think it is a great opportunity for Gallup Mid students to have an idea of what charitable organizations are in this community. I think that is something that the kids aren’t always aware of.”

Lovato added that she created a list of local charitable organizations for her students such as

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the Humane Society; however, the student body ultimately voted on what charities the school would donate to.

“I am really excited they selected the Veterans Helping Veterans,” she said. “I think that it really shows how patriotic this town is and also the American Cancer Society. I know that several of my students, here at Gallup Mid, have family members that have been impacted by cancer.”

Joining in on the fun is JFK Middle School, who is donating their proceeds to the Gallup Community Pantry so far. No other organizations have been named yet because each grade level is still deciding.

JFK Middle School Principal, Roberta Tayah, said that last year JFK Middle School organized a school dance and the proceeds, which was close to \$200 was donated to the Gallup Community Pantry for the holidays.

“We stay within our Gallup community,” she said “This is really good for students to know that it benefits their own community.”

As part of the incentive aspect of the charity drive, the school plans on having a drawing every Friday for students that donate more than a quarter. The prize will be a new long-sleeved shirt with the school logo on the front.

For more information on each middle school’s charity drive information, please contact Chief Manuelito Middle School Principal Steven Wargo at (505) 721-5600, Gallup Middle School Principal Carrie Lovato at (505) 721-1051, or JFK Middle School Principal Roberta Tayah at (505) 721-3100.