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Alicia Castle, the principal of Blackrock Elementary School in Coventry, waves after being blasted by paint, fulfilling a promise made to students if they raised \$2,000 for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Pennies for Patients campaign. Students raised \$2,177.50.

Principal splattered

Alicia Castle blasted with paint for a good cause

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COVENTRY — The principal at Blackrock Elementary School took a paintball in the gut last week. In fact, she took several, but it was for a good cause.

Alicia Castle, the principal at Blackrock Elementary School in Coventry, proposed a challenge to all of the students at the school earlier this month. She told them that if they raised as much money as they did last year for the Leukemia and Lymphoma's Pennies for Patients campaign that they could toss paint-doused sponges at her.

The students eagerly jumped on board and in three weeks time, all of the students at the school, from pre-k through fifth grade, raised \$2,177.50, beating last year's record of \$2,000. Castle had to deliver, and she did.

Last week she stood like a statue wearing an all white painter's uniform at the front of the school's Gymnasium. Poised in front of a plastic backdrop, select students from each grade came forward, drenched their potato-sized sponges in all different colored paints and then tossed them at her.

By the end of the event, her all-white



Kindergartner Nicholas Kanaczet hurls a paint-soaked sponge at Principal Alicia Castle.

attire was transformed into a multicolored rainbow of paint. She was spotted from head to toe in shades of red, blue, green, orange, pink and yellow.

Castle wasn't alone though. Deb Pelletier, the school's behavior specialist was also conned into getting in on the action. She may have had it even worse though. Pelletier had to slip and

slide down a mini slope outside the school into a pool of chocolate pudding.

Both of the "punishments" were created by the students, according to Kerrie Baris, a special education teacher at the school who helped to organize the fundraiser this year.

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Blackrock School Behavior Specialist Deb Pelletier slips and slides in chocolate pudding.

Principal

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Baris said the kids were asked to make suggestions on what they wanted the school principal and behavior specialist to do for the school motivator for the campaign. She said they came back with multiple ideas such as having them dress like old men, do crazy things with their hair and sing funny songs in front of the school. She said the top three ideas were presented to the students and they were given the opportunity to vote for their favorite.

Baris said that whenever the students are given motivators like this, they always deliver. She said all of the students brought in something, but the students in Raymond Raboin's fourth-grade class raised the most, handing \$358.18 at the end of the three weeks.

Raboin said one of his students, Austin Briggs, pushed his classroom's total over the top with a \$100 family donation.

Briggs said he asked his mother for help with the donation because he wanted to see the principal get painted up, but also because he also wanted to get the pizza party for his classroom. A pizza party is an additional reward from the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society for being the top fundraising classroom in the school.

When the school's final count was tallied, Baris said she and the rest of the counting committee, whom hand counted all of the change that students, faculty and staff brought in for the program, were astonished by how much had been raised.

"With the economy what it is today, I really didn't think that they would be able to do it, but our principal is so committed to this cause and she really kept them motivated to do it," Baris said. "She was on the loud speaker during morning announcements every day re-

mindng them and encouraging them to bring in whatever spare change they had and it really worked."

Baris said it is Castle's motivational skills that typically help to get the kids going about the campaign every year.

"Last year she kissed a pig and Mrs. [Deb] Pelletier, [the school's behavior specialist] took six pies of shaving cream in the face, so she is always doing fun things like this to challenge them and get them going about participating," Baris said. "I know that help-

school managed to raise as much as they did this year.

"A lot of families are really struggling right now, but they managed to raise over \$2,000," Watterson said. "I find that it is the principal challenges that help to push the schools over the top in terms of fundraising for our campaign because their own involvement truly does motivate the kids, but this school is always so creative and Mrs. Castle has always done a lot for us with this campaign, so they deserve the credit."