

DON'T SLEEP ON THESE KIDS...



Kendra Leigh Miller • Daily Times

A group of fifth-graders in Louise Martella's class are collecting new pajamas to be donated to the "One Million Good Nights" Program. Martella (far right) said that the class is a third of the way to their goal of 150 pairs by the end of February.

Hopkins Hill pajama drive has kids learning lessons

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COVENTRY — Louise Martella's fifth-grade class at Hopkins Hill Elementary School has taken the message of helping others they recently learned through a book they read called "Wonder," which is all about showing kindness to oth-

ers and putting that message into action by having a pajama drive until the end of the month.

"The book is all about kindness and just being good to others and we wanted to help and this was the good deed we can up with," said fifth-grade student Abbi Guertin.

"Wonder" is about a boy who is born with a facial deformity who goes into fifth grade. It's dif-

ficult being the "new kid" no matter what the circumstances but the book teaches how the main character, August, is just a normal kid with an extraordinary face and he convinces his peers that he's just like them.

"He's only 10 years old and he's had 37

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Pajama drive ongoing at Hopkins Hill

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surgeries and doesn't look like everyone else," said Jace Allen. "It makes you smile to make others happy. My favorite part was when we got to make the posters."

"Mrs. Tancredle said if we reach our goal of 150 pairs, we can wear pajamas to school," said Hanna Pierson. "It makes you feel happy to help others have what you have and it's a snowball effect."

Martella thought it being the middle of winter, this would be a great way to get students involved while doing a good deed.

"This is the first time we've done this and we're doing it through the Alan Shawn Feinstein Good Deeds Program," she said.

"They wanted to do something and I heard about a program called 'One Million

Good Nights' that Oprah Winfrey had on as a segment for one of her shows years ago," said the fifth-grade teacher. "I decide to have the Hopkins Hill Pajama Drive with donations going to a local chapter of 'One Million Good Nights.'"

The Pajama Program, founded in 2001, provides new pajamas for those in need nationwide, many of whom live in group shelters, temporary housing or are shuffled from one place to another, according to pajamaprogram.org.

Many of these children have never enjoyed the simple comfort of a new pair of pajamas.

The drive kicked off two weeks ago, right when the first major snowstorm hit, so donations have been slow to come in but Martella said the goal is 150 pairs.

"The kids announce it during the morning messages, practicing their public speaking skills and have made posters that have been hung throughout the school and have gone room to room taking collections," she said. "It's so cute to see them so excited. Once the seed was planted, they took off with it."

"These kids have a lot to be proud and it's been a few weeks since we've talked about this and talked about the book so it's great to see them recall so much and remember the message," Martella said.

So far, more than 50 pairs have been collected and students will be collecting until the end of February. They have to be brand new and donations are being accepted for all ages, from newborns to adults.