

COVENTRY

Hopkins Hill helps out with 'Good Deeds' program

Series of volunteer efforts under way at elementary school

KENDRA LOLIO
klolio@ricentral.com

COVENTRY — For many, the holiday season is a time to lend a helping hand. For the students and faculty at Hopkins Hill Elementary, every day of the year is considered an opportunity to help someone in need. This year the school is working on a number of helpful projects as part of their Fein-stein Good Deeds Program, and the students could not be more willing to use their time and energy to bring someone else a bit of happiness, especially during the holiday season.

Hopkins Hill Elementary is a Feinstein Leadership School, and students are taught daily about the importance of helping others, both inside the school as well as within their local community.

One of their good deeds projects involves kindergarten teacher, Meghan Brown, who will be participating in the Penguin Plunge at Roger Wheeler State Beach in Narragansett for the 16th year in a row. Brown has encouraged students to dress in their pajamas on

the last day of school before winter break, Thursday, Dec. 22 and to bring \$1 for the cause, as the event benefits the Special Olympics of Rhode Island.

The school is also participating in the "Baby Brigade" next month, which is a fundraiser for Children's Friend, a nonprofit that provides services for children and families in the adoption and foster-care systems. The school will be collecting bibs, diapers (any size), baby wipes, pajamas (birth to 24 months) and onesies (birth to 24 months) from Jan. 9 through Feb. 13. They hope to reach their goal of 500 items donated to help children in foster care, and the items collected will be hung in the school foyer for everyone to see.

Grade 4 teacher Kimberly O'Connell, who also oversees the school's Feinstein projects and mission, said that the goal is to get students involved in the community and to show them the importance of small acts of kindness.

"We're considered a Feinstein Leadership School and so we do a

See DEEDS, page A3

Deeds

Continued from page A1

lot of good deeds projects that either the Feinstein Foundation suggests to us or we do them on our own," said O'Connell. "It's not always fundraising though, it might also be helping out at school or at home. We like to get the kids involved in the community."

According to Hopkins Hill Elementary School Principal Kathy Tancrelle, the good deeds show the students that each individual person can make a difference if they try.

"Part of it is to show them that they can make a difference even though

they're 5, 6, 7 or 8 years old," said Tancrelle. "They can always be thinking about somebody else."

On Fridays the students wear their Feinstein Junior Scholar t-shirts and sweaters for "Feinstein Fridays," which serves as an extra reminder to do a good deed. The school's "Kindness Club" keeps track of students' good deeds, and O'Connell includes them during the morning announcements to give students some recognition for their kindness and to incentivize them to continue. Many times students even come up with project ideas themselves.

"A lot of students have a lot of great ideas and will go to Mrs. Tancrelle and ask if they can do it,"

O'Connell said. "Most of the time it really is all from them, and that's how we know that what we're doing is helping."

She added said that the school's emphasis on good deeds and kindness has even stayed with students beyond the walls of the building.

"This morning two 4th graders saw a dog over in the water across the street that was stuck in the mud and they helped the dog and were able to get it back to its owner," she explained. "They were so proud of that. I think just acknowledging the fact that it's important for the school community and outside the school, they think about it more."

Hopkins Hill has also hosted an

annual food drive for many years, and most recently collected more than 1,200 items including canned goods and turkeys for Thanksgiving, with donations from Dave's Marketplace, Stop and Shop, and Walmart. In March, students will be able to participate in "Pennies for Patients," where classrooms collect change for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. As an additional incentive, Tancrelle traditionally dresses up in a costume each year to celebrate the money raised.

"Mrs. Tancrelle is always a good sport," said O'Connell. "She never knows what we're going to dress her up in."

Students also help with the school

garden run by school nurse Diane Kowal, Recycling Club, Valentines for Vets, Locks for Love and much more. They also keep weekly journals where they are able to record their good deeds and acts of kindness.

According to O'Connell, Alan Shawn Feinstein often personally acknowledges the acts of the students, which further motivates them to continue the good work.

"Even though he is so very busy because there are so many Feinstein Schools now, he'll always send a letter or email just acknowledging what a great they did," she said. "They look at him like a celebrity around here."

"The kids love seeing him," Tancrelle added. "He's a role model."