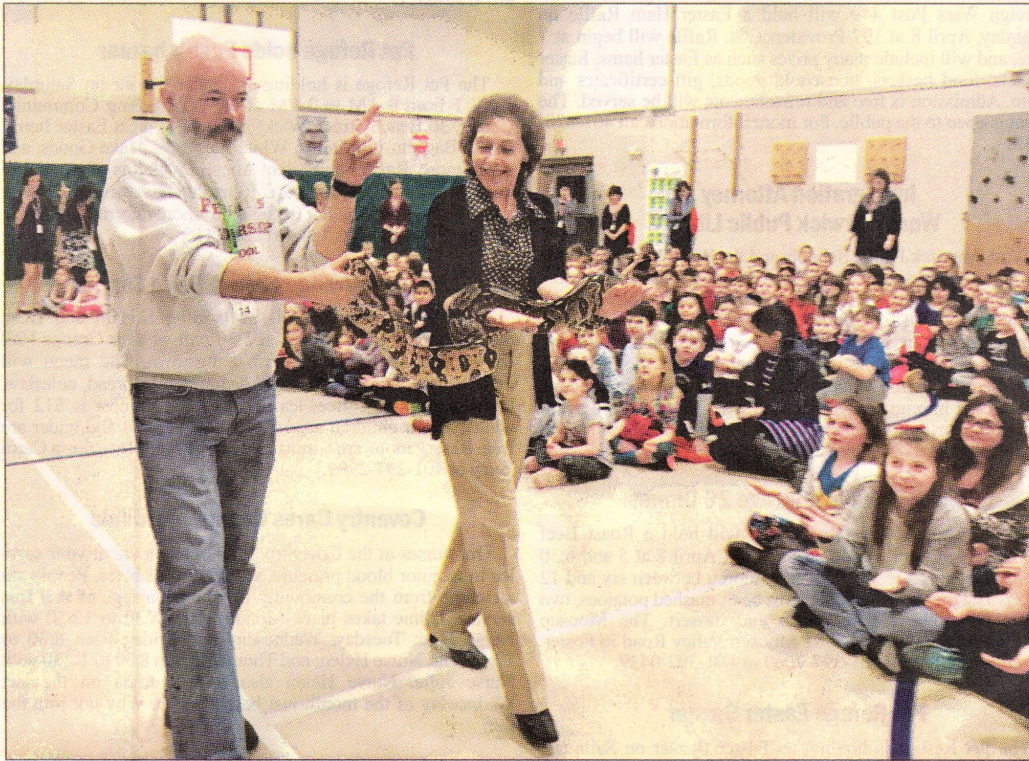


Snakes on a principal



Photos by Kendra Lolio

Ray Ward, of Bwana Iguana, and Hopkins Hill Elementary School Principal Kathy Tancrelle carry a red-tailed boa constrictor around the gymnasium in front of an assembly of students.

Faculty at Hopkins Hill Elementary take on challenges after school raises funds for Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

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COVENTRY — It has become an annual tradition at Hopkins Hill Elementary that after the students raise money for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, they are rewarded with a special surprise. This year they were able to come up with an impressive \$2,100.

The surprise varies from year to year, but it typically involves Principal Kathy Tancrelle and Behavior Specialist Mike Greene dressing up in costumes. The tradition incentivizes students to participate in community fundraising. It is a lesson in giving that has proven valuable to many school-age children.

This time, Tancrelle and Greene decided to outdo themselves and truly surprise everyone. She agreed to hold a real, live snake in front of the students, and he agreed to shave his head and beard.

On the big day, which many students never thought would really come, they filled the school gym and were positively bubbling with anticipation and excitement.

Kim O'Connell, who teaches Grade 4 at the school, explained that although they didn't hit their original \$3,000 goal, they still worked hard to pull off more than half, and that was something worth celebrating.

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Behavioral Specialist Mike Greene agreed to shave both his beard and head if the students raised at least \$1,500 — they raised over \$2,000.

Hopkins

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"You pulled it off," she told the students. "You are amazing, because in the third week we collected over \$1,000."

Ray Ward, the Owner of Bwana Iguana, pulled a more than 5-foot red tail boa constrictor from a small sack and draped it over Tancredelle's arms, which she held out before her. Affectionately named "Honey Bun," Ward said that boas spend a lot of time in trees, and encouraged the students to chant "be the tree" as they walked around the room so everyone could get a look.

Afterward, Greene situated himself in a chair in front of the crowd, grabbed a

pair of clippers and proceeded to shave his beard. By the time it was gone, every student in the room was roaring with laughter and shouting "Shave your head!"

The whole ordeal took only several minutes in all, but the students won't soon forget when one of their favorite teachers made their gym a barber shop that afternoon.

"They always make it their own every year and really get involved, even the staff get involved," said Campaign Manager Deborah Watterson, who accepted the money on behalf of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. "They have amazing school spirit.

Hopkins Hill has raised approximately \$13,000 since 2013. According to

Watterson, school fundraisers can be a meaningful way to teach compassion in children.

"Giving back is a huge part of their education," she said.

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society has been holding drives like Pennies for Patients and other programs since 1994 to fight cancers of the blood. They provide free advocacy and patient support services, and fund lifesaving blood cancer research. Pennies for Patients alone has raised millions of dollars thanks of the hard work of elementary, middle and high school students throughout the country.

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