



Submitted Photo

Alan Shawn Feinstein recently awarded the Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School of Coventry with a \$49,000 donation, a triple match of the \$13,000 the students raised through a read-a-thon in November and December.

Middle school earns \$49K with reading

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COVENTRY — If reading made this much money every day, the middle school would be rich.

For their efforts to raise money to fight national hunger, Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School students were rewarded with a \$49,000 donation to their school from Alan Shawn Feinstein himself.

In November and December, the students raised about \$13,000 through a read-a-thon hosted at the middle school, according to Superintendent Michael Almeida. The students were challenged by Feinstein, who told them that every dollar they raised would be matched in a donation to their school.

Right before the fundraiser ended, Feinstein decided to triple his match, Almeida said.

The Student Council Executive Board was instrumental in making the read-a-thon a success, said Mary Lou Bettez, the English language arts and literacy coordinator who helped the board put the event together.

All the students in the school pledged to read

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a number of pages between mid-November and mid-December, she said. Students started their reading outside of school hours but the event culminated on the last day when students spend the entire school day reading.

They arrived that morning in their pajamas with pillows and a tightly packed schedule of reading and being read to, Bettez said.

"It was great to see kids who are not usually engaged in the reading process getting involved. When [kids are allowed] to come to school in their pajamas every kid gets involved," she said with a smile.

While kids spread out reading at the school, the members of the executive board spent the day keeping a running tally of how many pages had been read. Each hour they marked a large thermometer to show the progress that was being made.

They also coordinated a hospitality center so that guest readers from throughout the community could get refreshments and be directed to the sites where they would read out loud, Bettez said.

Guest readers included costumed parents, Councilman Glenford Shibley, professional storyteller Mark Binder, Attorney General Patrick Lynch, local author Linda Brennan, a staff member at Citizen's Bank, Assistant Superintendents Michael Convery and James Erinakes, and many other community members, she said.

When the day was over, the students had read well over the goal of 120,000 pages and their pledges raised \$13,000.

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"I'm very pleased not only because it's the Alan Shawn Feinstein school [that raised this money] but also because most of those boys and girls have been Feinstein Junior Scholars in their

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Reading money will reinforce programs

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elementary schools," he said. "I'm just delighted. I am also very proud of the Coventry School District. All of their elementary schools are in our leadership program and have been doing things like this all along."

The money will go directly to student programs and supplies, Almeida said. He plans to use the \$49,000 to pay for the summer reading program, student intervention programs, microphones for the auditorium, the summer transition program, security cameras, positive behaviors interventions and supports, and some new technology for the middle school like laptops, smartboards, LCD projectors and

wireless access points.

Because of the donation, middle school students have opportunities that the district could not have afforded otherwise, Almeida said.

"We've had a vision to provide kids with more proactive support when they're not meeting proficiency. Usually kids wait until summer school to recover their credit, but that's too late." The programs will allow kids to do some after school work to recover credit from the previous trimester, he said.

Western Coventry Elementary School also received \$29,000 for their fundraising efforts, Feinstein said. Outside of Coventry, the Jewish Community Day School received \$53,147 and Bishop Keough received \$46,500.