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Tiogogue Elementary School students Emma Grifka (left) and Olivia Hookins (right) smile with their donation of pet supplies for the North Kingstown-Exeter Animal Protection League.

Inspired to give

Ten-year-old Olivia Hopkins of Tiogogue Elementary collects pet supplies for North Kingstown animal shelter

By KENDRA PORT

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COVENTRY — Tiogogue Elementary School Fourth Grader Olivia Hopkins, 10, wanted to do her part to make sure local shelter animals are receiving the best care possible while awaiting their forever homes, so she started an initiative at her school to collect supplies for the North Kingstown-Exeter Animal Protection League. Along with her fellow classmates, Emma Grifka and Mariah Smith, and a wildly successful school-wide collection drive, Hopkins managed to gather over 1,200 items to donate to the pet refuge.

In an interview, Hopkins said she never expected her classmates to feel as passionately about the collection drive as she did.

"I was expecting to get just a few things," she explained. "I didn't think everyone would care that much. Everyone said they were happy and glad they were able to contribute."

Hopkins collected hun-

dreds of cans of wet cat food, numerous bags of dry food and treats, litter, pet beds, toys and cleaning supplies, enough to help the shelter for months to come.

What did she learn from this experience? Even one single person can make a huge difference.

In Tara D'Aleno's fourth grade ELA class, Hopkins read a book called "The Power of W.O.W.!" by Crystal Hubbard, the story of a group of children who set out to raise money to save their local library. She credits the book as her inspiration for starting her own collection drive for animals.

"I'm just one person, but one person can really do a lot for the world," she said. "The story was about these kids who wanted to save a library and they started a fundraiser to do it, so I wanted to do a fundraiser for an animal shelter."

She'd originally had the idea last year, but since it was the end of the school year she decided to hold off. Then, after reading The Pow-



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After her first trip to the shelter, Hopkins made another special delivery just weeks later.

er of W.O.W.!, she decided to bring it to fruition.

"Olivia approached me with this idea and I thought, what a great way to integrate text to real world experiences," said D'Aleno. "It was a great idea. I said what I want you to do is work on a pro-

posal — state your case — and put it into persuasive writing. It started out as a Feinstein project and it moved into something so much bigger."

"It was a ton of stuff she collected," said Tiogogue's

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School Nurse and Feinstein Program Coordinator Gina D'Aguanno. "I just think to do something like this at that age, it deserves kudos."

D'Aleno asked Hopkins to pitch the idea to the school principal, Domenic Giusti, who loved it. She set to work collecting and decorating boxes for each classroom to store the donations, which filled up with supplies quite quickly.

"Animals need help," said Hopkins. "Some people will leave grown and baby animals on the street and it just breaks my heart so much. I did a lot of research to find a no-kill shelter."

The shelter told Hopkins her donation was the largest they'd ever received.

"I am so proud of Olivia and her efforts," said Giusti. "She is such a kind and gentle soul, always leading by example at school. Anytime a student wants to take the initiative to organize and implement a plan, with a goal in mind, we should always help to support and foster it. It takes courage to organize a school-wide event like Olivia did. She showed her quiet but determined leadership qualities to all of us."

In a statement, an employee with the animal shelter said they are appreciative of Hopkins' efforts and thank everyone who participated in the drive.

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