

Builders Club teaches leadership Kiwanis-led program gives St. Stephen's students hands-on experience with community service...

By: John Gardner, Post Independent Staff, Glenwood Springs, Colorado, October 22, 2007

Kids can accomplish amazing things when they put their minds to something. They mimic adult behavior, and they learn by observation. That's exactly what Kiwanis International of Glenwood Springs is counting on. St. Stephen's Catholic School students in Glenwood Springs are well on their way of becoming the leaders of tomorrow through the Kiwanis-sponsored Builders Club. "The program is really designed to help them learn how to be good leaders in the community," said Glenwood Springs Kiwanis Vice President Bob Littler. "We've had a very successful club at St. Stephen's."

The Builders Club is a precursor to high school's Key Club, according to Littler, and it prepares students for success in those programs by giving them a hands-on approach to community service. Over the nine years the Builders Club has been a part of St. Stephen's it's contributed to many projects benefiting students throughout the valley, state and nation, and internationally as well. The club is designed around other service organizations like Kiwanis in that they hold fundraisers to collect contributions to help organizations that students choose.

So far they've donated \$600 to build a playground and purchased 600 boxes of crayons for students in a small town in Peru, they donated money to help with medical bills for a student named Chaim in Israel three years ago, and they recently wrote a \$1,000 check to the Invisible Children fund that helps to build schools and provide education for children of war-torn Uganda. "It really teaches them about community service and getting involved with their community," said Rosario Young, Builders Club advisor and St. Stephen's art teacher. "They've been pretty prolific in what they've done." And that's how it happens; it's all about the kids and is up to them to decide how they want to help." It really is up to them," Young said. Young's passion is teaching art to middle-schoolers, but it's her leadership and involvement in the community, and organizations like Kiwanis, that make it easy to teach students the importance of being active in their community.

That's how they came to help out 13-year-old Tanner Hawkins of Carbondale. "One of our fifth-grade students came to us about Tanner, and they wanted to help," Young said. Hawkins suffers from apert syndrome, which is a genetic defect characterized by specific malformations of the skull, midface, hands and feet. Young said that Hawkins participates in the WindWalker equine therapy program in Carbondale. The Builders Club wanted to help out and raised money, through pancake breakfasts and other fundraisers, to help pay for the WindWalker fees.

"The Builders Club sponsored (Hawkins) last year with \$400, but then Kiwanis thought it was such a good idea that we took it from there," Littler said. Now Kiwanis helps out Hawkins. The Builders Club comprises 22 fifth- through eighth-grade students at St. Stephen's who meet for 15 minutes each Tuesday during lunch to talk business. They have a president and a vice president, a treasurer and members all with one goal: being active in their community.

"There motto is 'We build,'" Young said.

And that they do.

Contact John Gardner: 384-9114, jgardner@postindependent.com

