

DAY SCHOOL OWNERS IN CENTRAL TEXAS RAISE MONEY FOR HAITI

BY JOSEPH M. DE LEON • FRIDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2010



Debbie Immel, chief development officer for the American Red Cross of Central Texas, drops a hockey puck on the ice as Goddard School owners square off. From left, Ryan Rastelli of Goddard in Round Rock, John Nieman of Goddard in Leander and Butch Aggen of Goddard in Leander joined forces with Goddard owners in Pflugerville and Austin to raise money for Haiti relief efforts Feb. 28 during Hockey for Haiti at Cedar Park Center.

CEDAR PARK - After Butch Aggen saw the devastation in Haiti caused by a massive earthquake in January, he called on his colleagues to find out what The Goddard School could do to help.

Five Goddard School locations throughout the greater Austin area hope to raise more than \$5,000 for the American Red Cross of Central Texas' Haiti relief efforts. Aggen and his wife Maria own the school located at 1905 El Salido Parkway in Cedar Park.

"This endeavor fits in nicely with our curriculum," Aggen said, "because it enables children in a more tangible way to learn about Haiti, its culture, its inhabitants and the unfortunate events that are affecting that area right now."

Goddard schools in Cedar Park, Leander, Round Rock, Pflugerville and Austin have teamed up to raise money for Haiti. Classrooms at each school plan to hold bake sales, silent auctions and penny wars, in which a jar is used to collect change from students, parents and teachers.

The King of Prussia, Pa.-based Goddard School is a franchise preschool for children six weeks to six years old that has more than 300 locations across the United States.

Ryan Rastelli, owner of the Goddard at 4076 Gattis School Road in Round Rock, said the schools have a long tradition of raising money for such organizations as the Humane Society and Habitat for Humanity. He said the fundraisers help children learn about geography and current events, but lessons also reach beyond the classroom.

"Each of these brings a valuable learning experience for our kids," Rastelli said. "Socially, this prepares our children to grow up to become good citizens of the community."

The five schools will sponsor Hockey for Haiti Feb. 28 at 5 p.m. at Cedar Park Center, 2100 Avenue of the Stars in Cedar Park. Texas Stars will take on San Antonio Rampage.

Goddard staff and parents will participate in a tug of war and relay races on the ice between game periods. Friends and family of the Goddard Schools are encouraged to attend and can pick up discount ticket forms from participating Goddard locations.

The Texas Stars and Cedar Park Center held a similar fundraiser on Jan. 29, in which a silent auction of hockey sticks, helmets and jerseys raised \$15,000 for the American Red Cross of Central Texas's Haiti relief efforts.

Debbie Immel, chief development officer, said hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations have poured into the Central Texas chapter office to benefit people in Haiti. Fundraising is ongoing and it could be many weeks before Immel knows how much money for Haiti has been funneled through her office.

It is common for some schools to participate in such fundraising campaigns, but Immel said she can not remember when so many children participated in a relief effort.

"We've had everything from children walking into our office with piggy banks to large corporations donating thousands of dollars to the relief effort," she said. "But this one really struck a chord with children, I think, because of the images of Haiti on the news. It's been remarkable."