

PSD students surpass fundraising goal

BY HALLIE WOODS • HALLIEWOODS @COLORADOAN.COM • MARCH 17, 2009

Poudre School District students did it.

With 4,000 volunteer hours, 900 students and a lot of energy, high school students from five high schools across the district raised \$20,600 for the United Way of Larimer County: \$600 over their goal.

"I was absolutely astounded," said Paul Kauzmann, 18, a Poudre High School senior who thought up the idea with Lydia O'Reilly, 17, a junior. "The money raised is great, the volunteer hours that were committed, ah, that's just great."

The two students, both United Way board members, thought up the idea to raise \$20,000 by getting high school students to volunteer for monetary pledges. Students at Poudre, Fort Collins, Fossil Ridge, Rocky and Polaris joined together to volunteer at a variety of community agencies and projects in a two-week period.

"You had all kinds of ranges of kids volunteering," Kauzmann said. "Whatever your volunteer level was before, it got upped. That's one of the great things."

All the money will go to the United Way of Larimer County's Community Impact Fund, which feeds United Way programs.

"We just seem to be bombarded with bad news about how awful everything is with the economy, and it's just so refreshing to see young people so optimistic and willing to take on quite a challenge and really move forward," said Gordan Thibedeau, president and chief executive officer for United Way of Larimer County.

The Bohemian Foundation announced last week that it would match whatever money the students raised and donate that back into the schools for educational purposes. Each individual school will receive the amount it raised and students will have a voice in how the money is spent.

The Bohemian Foundation could not be reached for comment Monday.

Polaris Expeditionary Learning School, which had 78 percent participation, and second-place winner Poudre High School, which had 27 percent participation, also will receive a free private concert from Clear Channel Radio Stations of Northern Colorado on April 15 at Poudre High School. The performers will not be announced until the show.

"We are absolutely thrilled and very excited that we had such a great number of kids participate," said Pam Davis, vice president of marketing and communications for United Way of Larimer County.

Kauzmann said he and other students involved also hoped the project would change a sometimes negative stereotype of teenagers.

"We just spent two weeks of our own time contributing back to our community," Kauzmann said. "High school kids can say they made a difference, a big one, in many people's lives."