

## Poudre teens give gift of time with drive

GORDAN THIBEDEAU • MARCH 16, 2009

---

There are moments in our lives, often daily, when we think there isn't enough time to do this or that.

During a brief conversation with a young man I met, he said something that made me stop and think about the times I've wondered how I would possibly have enough time to complete all I needed to do. He said, "The most important gift you can give someone is your time."

This comment, while said in passing, stayed with me and caused me to reflect on the efforts of two local high school students in recent months.

Paul Kauzmann and Lydia O'Reilly are both seniors at Poudre High School. They serve as youth board members for United Way of Larimer County. This wasn't enough for them. They wanted to serve their community by raising \$20,000 for United Way of Larimer County, and they wanted to change the perception of teens.

Paul and Lydia created and organized the first PSD Volunteer Drive, which will come to a close this week. The students not only garnered support from the school district but successfully engaged hundreds, maybe even thousands, of students to participate. Both students had a vision and wanted to make a lasting impact in Fort Collins for years to come.

In addition to going to school, Paul and Lydia both work and stay busy with extracurricular activities and commitments, all while applying to universities with the intent of starting college this fall. It's been such a pleasure watching these teenagers transform into young adults.

Their passion and commitment is the driving force behind the PSD Volunteer Drive coming to fruition. Paul and Lydia created a powerful force in our community when they combined fundraising and volunteerism. The students volunteered and in return asked sponsors to pledge dollars for every hour they donated.

While the clock was ticking during the planning for the drive, Paul and Lydia never once worried about time. They didn't wonder if there was enough of it, and they didn't use lack of time as an excuse. I am fairly certain the phrase "time is of the essence" is not a familiar one for these teens.

Raising \$20,000 to help the community through United Way of Larimer County is a generous gift. But it's Paul and Lydia's gift, the gift of time, which made it happen.

**Gordan Thibedeau is president and CEO of United Way of Larimer County. Reach him at 407-7000.**