

Students unite to assist community

Friendly competition spurs United Way fundraiser

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An idea formed by two high school students who sit on the United Way of Larimer County Board of Directors has become a positive opportunity for teenagers to contribute to their community.

High school students from Fort Collins High, Fossil Ridge, Rocky Mountain, Poudre and Polaris Expeditionary Learning are engaging in a friendly competition to raise \$20,000 for the local United Way. Students are charged with finding sponsors for each hour they volunteer for community service from Feb. 21 to March 6. The school that contributes the most hours receives a private, free concert from 96.1 KISS-FM.

Among the many positive aspects of this effort is that it was created by and will be implemented by the students themselves. By engaging students in five high schools, participation has increased as has the likelihood for success.

Students Lydia O'Reilly, a 17-year-old Poudre High junior, and Paul Kauzmann, 18, a PHS senior, came up with the idea when they learned that the poverty rate in Larimer County was increasing. Rather than simply accept the troubling news, the students wanted to demonstrate that teenagers can impact positive change in their communities. With the blessing of Poudre School District, they went on to contact students within each school to help form committees for the fundraiser.

This isn't the first time local high school students have successfully worked together. Just last month, students from four of the high schools collected nearly 40,000 books for the Invisible Children's "Schools for Schools" (www.invisiblechildren.com) book drive that benefits Ugandan children.

Too often, teenagers are stereotyped in a negative light. Efforts such as these illustrate the power of young people to improve their community.

INTERESTED?

For more information on the student fundraiser, visit www.psdvolunteerdrive.com or call Pam Davis at 407-7008.