

SYMMES STUDENTS SAVE FOR COVERED PLAYCOURT

By Jennifer Teuber



STUDENTS IN MRS. GENTNER'S CLASS COUNT COINS IT COLLECTED AS PART OF ITS COIN DRIVE HELD IN EARLY MARCH. THE STUDENTS MANAGED TO RAISE \$1,325 IN A WEEK. SO FAR, THE SCHOOL HAS MANAGED TO RAISE \$17,000 FOR ITS COVERED PLAYGROUND. IN ORDER TO REACH ITS GOAL OF \$50,000, \$33,000 IS STILL NEEDED.

With the Florida sun beating down, average temperatures in May can run close to 90 degrees, which can cause sunburns, heat stroke, heat exhaustion and dehydration. To keep its students protected during the warmer months, Symmes Elementary is hoping to build a covered playground for its students.

For one week in early March, the students at Symmes, located at 6280 Watson Rd. in Riverview, collected change for a coin drive it held. Students managed to raise over \$1,300 in just five days for its playcourt.

"We were very excited about the amount raised," said Assistant Principal AnnaMarie Rothenbush. "Mrs. Gentner really did a great job with this. The classes were very eager to be one of the top five so they could attend the Step Team lessons provided by the Step Team from Tampa Bay Tech. The students really enjoyed the performances and the lessons."

The school has managed to raise approximately \$17,000 towards its efforts to build a covered playcourt, but still needs \$33,000 more to reach its goal of \$50,000. It has been fundraising for this court since last school year. Past fundraising events include the Jingle Jog in December, California Pizza Kitchen Night and the recycling program funds go to the cov-

ered playcourt.

Once it reaches its goal of \$50,000, the school district will match the funds program. The approximate cost of the playcourt is \$100,000. "We have to raise half of that for them to match," said Rothenbush.

According to Kristin Jernigan with the communications office for Hillsborough County Public Schools, the matching funds program was established in 2001-2002 by the superintendent to assist schools and their partners in raising funds for school improvements by matching dollars in any amount up to \$50,000.

"Any school can participate in the matching funds program and it is not limited to covered play courts," Jernigan said. "[Other] examples include the purchase of technology and playground equipment, mar-

quees, pavers for outdoor courtyards and renovations."

Once the playcourt is complete, Symmes Elementary students will be able to use it during physical education (P.E.) classes, which will be held underneath the structure throughout the year.

"We will be able to hold special events and assemblies there as well," Rothenbush said.

The school is currently in the planning stages of another fundraiser for the playcourt, a girl's day out scrapbooking event, called "Crop Til You Drop," for Saturday, May 9 from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Registration for this event is \$25 and will go towards the playcourt. The registration includes a space for scrapbooking, lunch and snacks and door prizes. Vendors will be available with supplies, mini-lessons and the latest products.

It will be working on more ideas for the 2009-2010 school year.

For more information or to make a tax deductible donation, please contact the school at 740-4182 or visit its Website at <http://symmes.mysdhc.org/>.

PET MARKET CELEBRATES ONE-YEAR HOLISTIC VENTURE

By Laurie Zaversnik

When shopping for pet food and supplies, you probably think about the health and happiness of your precious, furry family members. At Dog Gone Holistic, a natural pet market for dogs and cats, owners Kim and Chris Tom want your pets to have the healthiest foods, treats and supplements available, as well as fun pet toys, apparel, beds, bowls, collars, leashes and other necessary accessories.

"The companies we buy from have strict standards for their products," says Kim. "Then, [the products] have to meet our standards to make it in our store."

The husband and wife team both agree they had a good first year as owners of Dog Gone Holistic. Kim says it's always very rewarding when customers come back and mention how great their pets are doing after trying healthy foods. "I get a lot of enjoyment out of hearing about coats being shinier and pets being healthier," says Kim. "People in the area are very open-minded and super friendly. They really want to do what's best for their pets."

"We have seen an increase in customers month after month," says Chris. "It's been nice."

With more than 20 different brands of dog and cat food on Dog Gone



DOG GONE HOLISTIC OWNERS CHRIS AND KIM TOM WELCOME CUSTOMERS TO THEIR PET-FRIENDLY STORE.

Holistic's shelves, the knowledgeable and patient store owners are always ready to educate customers about the dos and don'ts of purchasing pet food, with reading the ingredient labels on packages being a top priority. "The trend is toward natural, healthy ingredients," says Kim. "When you get rid of chemicals and by-products, health issues can be reversed with a good diet."

"With this type of store, we want to spend time with people and help them find things that will work for their pets," adds Chris.

Dogs and cats are welcome to shop with their owners, and there are items for every budget. Kim says Dog Gone Holistic has a "Frequent Feeder Program," which allows customers to receive a free bag of pet food after purchasing a certain number of bags. On Tuesdays or Fridays, shoppers who spend a set amount of money get to play a "Dog Got Mail? Mystery Mailbox Goodies Game" and choose a key to a doggie mailbox full of mystery pet goodies.

Dog Gone Holistic is located at 5620 FishHawk Crossing Blvd. in Lithia's FishHawk Ranch Publix Shopping Center. For more information, call 651-0842 or visit www.doggoneholistic.biz.



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