



Students act on Haiti earthquake tragedy

Two local brothers help raise funds for victims of natural disaster

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of the Gateway

Published: 12:54PM January 27th, 2010

The heartbreak of watching coverage of the Haiti earthquake has prompted many people to ask, "How can we help?"

While the relief effort continues to flow into the island nation and the death toll continues to rise, local students are answering that question, even when they're not prompted by a parent or teacher.

Sahil Iqbal, an 11-year-old sixth-grader at Lighthouse Christian School in Gig Harbor, wasn't going to just watch all the devastation on TV and not do anything about it.

"Seeing people suffer and stuff, it's hard," he said.

After watching events unfold in Haiti, Iqbal and his family approached Lighthouse Christian secondary principal Stephen Roddy and asked if the boy could speak about the issue during chapel.

"The school has been extremely supportive," said Jawad Iqbal, the father of both Sahil and Zarrar.

Sahil put together a PowerPoint presentation that informed his fellow students about what was going on in Haiti, along with how the relief effort was progressing.

The kicker was a personal challenge to all of his classmates: Let's help out.

"They need help right now," he said.

Soon afterward, jars went out to each homeroom and into the school's office, to raise funds for the American Red Cross.

In the first two days, the jars collected \$215, an average of more than \$2 per student in the 80-person middle school student body.

Zarrar, a fourth-grader at LCS, came up with his own way to help out the Haitians. On Thursday, he'll host a bake sale, with all proceeds going to the American Red Cross.

Zarrar even threw in \$50 of his own allowance into the jar.

When an earthquake struck Pakistan in 2005 and killed about 80,000 people, their father helped set up hospitals. Jawad Iqbal remembers the humanitarian relief that poured into the country and helped those desperate for help.

The family was living in Vancouver, B.C., at the time, and they helped to send clothing to Pakistan. The children even sent some of their toys and bicycles to the country.

Sahil's efforts count toward his community service requirement, but it shows much more about his character than just an assignment, Roddy said.

"He has a real heart for helping others," Roddy said. "You're just encouraged to see students at a young age that are focused on serving others. He realizes that he can help, and that he is not powerless."

Sahil Iqbal's aunt, Nabila Chowdhry, also is planning to raffle off a curry dinner to help benefit Haiti.

She said it's nice to see her nephew helping others, following in the footsteps of his family.

"I am so proud of him," she said.

How are you helping?

The Peninsula Gateway is compiling information for next week's paper regarding local response to the Haiti earthquake. If you have information on what a local school, group or organization is doing to help, please e-mail nate.hulings@gateline.com by 4 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 28. The information needed includes:

What organization?

What is being done? (donations, food drives, etc.)

How much has been raised?

Who is receiving the funds?

What would you like to say about the effort?

Reach reporter Nate Hulings at 253-853-9243 or by e-mail at nate.hulings@gateline.com.

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