



CES Pursues a Hungry Free Community ***100 Cans for 100 Days of School***

by Nancy Longino

How do you help children learn to help others? Are we born with that desire or must we be taught to help others? Mrs. Jessica Morrow, Mrs. Looney and Mrs. Barbie, all Kindergarten teachers at Celeste Elementary school believe that first you show them the rewards that reaching out and helping others will bring to their own heart with that act of kindness. Such as the feeling of satisfaction from helping others with a problem that might have seemed too huge for one person to make a difference, then you let them experience for themselves that sense of pride and warmth that washes over them when they see that their contribution has been able to help someone less fortunate.

With the unfortunate fact of hunger being a reality in every community *One Hundred Cans for One Hundred Days of School* is a project that the Celeste Elementary Kindergarten Teachers put into action for the students to help the needy. Starting a campaign to collect can goods took good planning and thought beforehand, with the cans ending up split between the four local churches for their food pantries. The teachers posted flyers and sent home reminders encouraging parents to support the program; wanting the program to get off the ground in order to influence the small children with the belief that *one person can make a difference!* The program started at the early levels of education in hopes of laying the groundwork for helping them see the need to look beyond themselves and care about what is going on around them; taking an active role in caring for others. "Helping others is more than an action; it's a trained way of thinking," said Jessica Morrow. Many of the children remembered the Thanksgiving food drive and wanted to 'give again'. One lone can of English peas showed up with a taste enhancing hint written in black marker on the top "If yucky tasting, add a little salt." Some of the children expressed concern for the cuisine preference of those receiving the cans "I hope they like spaghetti because that is my favorite," said one kindergarten student.

By encouraging this type of volunteering, we can teach empathy by cultivating this behavior at a young age. Then perhaps the amount of canned food needed to feed the hungry might not seem like such a big mountain to climb, but an achievable goal to some little ones with little feet - making baby steps -but sure enough leading the way of volunteering with some very "big hearts".