

Grade 4/5 students take colourful approach to rebuilding Aurora United Church



By Brock Weir

Aylin, Keira, Serin and Audrey are four students looking for ways to help their community.

They might not all attend church regularly, or be religious in any way whatsoever, but last month when they saw what happened after fire swept through Aurora United Church last month, they knew a good chunk of their community was hurting.

But rather than moving on, flipping open a laptop or turning on a video game, these girls decided to do something about it and let their fingers do the talking.

Last Friday, these students, all classmates at Hartman Public School on Conover Avenue, set up a table with over a hundred unique and colourful rings, bracelets, and other trinkets made out of rubber bands on their trusty Rainbow Looms.

Ranging in price from a 50 cent bracelet to more intricate beaded pieces going up to the higher price brackets, the students racked up over \$80 in sales to classmates, teachers, and visitors to the school all in the name of helping to rebuild Aurora United Church.

"We thought we could raise money for the rebuild," said Keira Fraser. "I checked it out the day after the fire, and I saw the bad damage. I thought maybe we could fundraise because they need a lot of money if they are going to rebuild the church."

It was an idea which caught on with Aylin Kashef, Serin Chong, and Audrey Vo, and they plan to continue their Friday morning sales as long as they can as the school year comes to a close.

"Rainbow looks are popular and we thought it was something everyone could come and buy so we could fundraise," said Serin.

Added Aylin, with some degree of satisfaction after how fast their items moved last week: "The first Friday, not many people came because not enough people listen to the announcements!"

By then, however, the tide had turned. In addition to a long lineup of students and teachers, last week's sale was also attended by Aurora United Church parishioners Pat and David Ferris. Their granddaughter is a student at Hartman, and they learned about the sale both through the school newsletter as well as Aurora United Church's regular bulletin.

"We thought we could come and help them out and be a part of it," said Pat. "They realise what they are doing is very good for the community and it makes them proud of themselves. For us, it means a lot that they want to do this for their community."

David agreed, noting that it was 'gratifying' to see the community come together to support the congregation.

'Especially so as these girls thought it up on their own,' he said. 'They were aware of it and decided they could do something. I think it is good for them as young citizens to pick this up.'

A healthy dose of pride was also shared by teacher Lorraine Doran as she watched, alongside a parent volunteer, as sales flourished. For her, seeing an initiative like this take off, and driven by the students themselves, shows that they, the teachers, are doing something right.

'When the kids come up with ideas to take initiative, I always try and find a way to make it happen,' said Ms. Doran. 'One of the young ladies came up to me [with the idea], and I sent her back to write up a proposal so I had a clear idea of what the group wanted to do.'

'This tells us we are doing our jobs. Over the last few years, [our school has focused on] making a difference. We have been talking to kids for years about what they can do to make a difference in the school, what they can do to make a difference at home, in the community and in the world. It is really lovely to see it is not a teacher idea. The students have planned it, put it together, initiated it, and they are learning to become citizens.'