

Local students help rebuild SickKids ? one candy cane at a time

By Brock Weir

Toronto's SickKids Hospital is in the middle of a desperately needed billion dollar rebuild campaign, and Rick Hansen Public School students are banding together to do their part ? one candy cane at a time.

This week, in the last few days before kids break for the winter holiday, members of student council will be busy selling homemade reindeer candy canes at a buck-a-pop, in the hopes of having a positive impact on the fundraiser.

Armed with nut-free candy canes ? some donated by grocery stores Superstore and Longo's, others purchased with funds donated to the cause ? and a variety of pipe cleaners, students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 have been hard at work turning the ordinary canes into something extraordinary, and they are hoping to top last year's fundraising efforts, which netted \$800.

?We know we don't live in a utopian world and it is shifting and evolving,? said Student Council member Paradis Khodaverdi, Grade 8, of why they have chosen to give back. ?We have a group in our school called Safe Spaces and, with these changes, we thought, ?Why don't we just contribute to our society and our community??

Adds fellow Student Council and Grade 8 student Alyssa Neuman: ?I have been at Rick Hansen since it opened and, at the start, there weren't a lot of fundraisers and teams. However, that has changed and there is a lot to get involved in. Our motto is to be difference-makers.?

The candy cane initiative isn't the only way the Rick Hansen community is setting out to make a difference this holiday season. They are also in the midst of hosting a winter coat drive and building a mitten tree for local kids in need, in partnership with the local Lions Club.

The school is collecting new hats and mittens, as well as gently-used coats, snow pants and other winter gear, for the initiative. ?Christmas is a giving season and our school would like to contribute to that by giving to the less fortunate,? says Paradis. ?The season is not only about giving to your family, friends and school, it is about giving to the people who need things, specifically with all the winter apparel and gear.?

Adds Alyssa: ?Besides, if you're not using [your coat] and they are just sitting in your closet, why not give them to someone who can benefit??

If you have gently-used coats and snow pants that you're not using and want to answer the call to give them to someone who can benefit, Rick Hansen Public School says they will continue collecting coats and making sure they get to the Lions Club through March.

Rick Hansen Public School is located at 490 Mavrinac Boulevard.