

How heart warming to see youngsters caring and sharing

I'm a firm believer in giving back. Pay it forward. Help make a difference.

It warmed my heart to see a group of young fourth grade girls take the bull by the horns and make a philanthropic effort on their own.

Ten-year-old Kendra was diagnosed with ITP (Immune Thrombocytopenia), a disease where cells attack the platelets and there aren't enough new platelets produced to make up for those destroyed. To avoid large bruises and extra bleeding, it became necessary to take extra precaution.

So life changed in a hurry for an active fourth grader who could no longer take part in the sports activities she loved. When friends are running in P.E., she has to walk. When they're playing, she has to watch from the bench.

However her perspective changes when going for blood draws and exams at Children's Hospital. She ends up in the same unit as children with cancer. She's generally the only one with any hair and she has long hair. She hears their screams and feels sad for them. Her focus is no longer on what she can't do.

Knowing Makenna and Travis and the battles they've faced with cancer also weighs on local youth.

Talk started among fourth grade friends about raising money for others. They started making bracelets, head bands, cookies and planned to meet at the library on a Sunday afternoon to sell their wares. Large posters were made.

Jerzee got on her mom's computer to make flyers. As the girls were driven to the library corner, Moms asked if they could help but the girls had things under control and appeared to be having fun in the process.

One mom had made lemonade and hot chocolate. Another mom posted pictures on facebook. Some folks who weren't in town asked if they could connect with certain girls in the picture to make a contribution.

Most items were posted at 50 cents but people rarely wanted change.

Evidently a batch of Koolaid didn't have sugar added and the girls warned possible patrons that it was really sour. That didn't seem to matter and they bought anyway, one volunteer shared with a grin.

Eleven girls showed up at the first gathering, evidently including an extra who wasn't a fourth grader. Besides Kendra and Jerzee, the first event brought Kendall, Remi, Chloe (who was referred to as the manager), Kiersten, Virginia, Lucy, Darci, LaReina and Jolee. More joined in later efforts and this week brought totals up to an estimated \$200.

As sales continue, the task is to decide for sure where the money will go. Although some thought it should go to the local hospital, others have considered helping children specifically, maybe St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. Other options have been suggested, so a team meeting is in the making.

I tip my hat to you, girls!! And I commend the parents who have obviously instilled a very admirable trait in their children, probably by the examples they have set. It feels good to give unselfishly. Sometimes it becomes as much a blessing for the giver as the receiver.

What a wonderful thing to learn at a young age!

LORI PANKONIN is co-publisher of Johnson Publications newspapers in Imperial,

Wauneta and Grant, and part-owner of the Holyoke Enterprise in Holyoke, Colo. E-mail: ljpank@chase3000.com