



## Perris Press Release

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### Palm Elementary Students Show Community Commitment

The students at Palms Elementary School pride themselves on their campus motto: Commitment to Community.

That commitment was never more in evidence than in recent weeks when the students collected 2,000 cans of food that will be distributed to underprivileged Perris residents.

The school is working with the Perris Rotary Club, which in turn is partnering with other Rotary clubs in the Inland Empire to provide a million meals to impoverished residents of Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The 2010 U.S. Census indicated that 30 percent of families in some pockets of the two counties live in poverty.

"These children really took this project to heart and went above and beyond," said Vince Ponce, superintendent of the Perris Elementary School District and a member of the Perris Rotary. "It's one thing to get out and talk about helping the community. It's another thing to do it."

Palms Elementary principal Juan Hernandez was equally impressed that the 900-student K-6 grade campus met its can collecting challenge.

"The kids want to learn about their community, be part of their community and give back to their community," Hernandez said.

Rotarians from Inland Southern California will package the canned goods Oct. 6 at Second Harvest Food Bank in Riverside. In Perris, the St. James Catholic Church food pantry will be among the major beneficiaries.

Members of the Palms Student Council tallied the cans as the count increased and encouraged their friends and classmates to donate cans of corn, peaches, pears, green beans, chili and soup.

Sixth-grader Sophia Esperjo, 10, updated the school with daily reports over the public-address system.

"I like to help other," Sophia said. "It's nice to be able to send food to people who don't have enough."

Taylor Thornburg, 11, said she got to count cans as the collection drive continued. Eventually, the pile of cans covered most of the stage in the school cafeteria.

"It's important to get involved because some families do not have enough money to buy food," said Taylor, a sixth-grader. David Barbier, 11, a sixth-grader, said he donated seven cans of corn and other veggies because contributing "helps people in need."

"I feel good about helping out," David said. "I want to show other students that they need to be positive, not negative, role models."



Members of the Palms Elementary School Student Council display some of the 2,000 cans of food collected to help feed the underprivileged..