



Service Learning News

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by Judy Brookhart and Amanda Kuhlen

Dear Parents:

Many of you may recall that last summer a group of our middle school students spent a week at Heifer Ranch in central Arkansas. They returned to Old Trail School filled with a passion for service, a heightened awareness of their global responsibilities, and a commitment to the organization which challenged and encouraged them. That desire, coupled with a school wide appreciation for Heifer's mission and a love of animals which spans the years and generations has focused us on our next service learning project. (You can learn more about Heifer Ranch and the summer trip by referring back to the summer issue of the Old Trail magazine at <http://www.oldtrail.org/pdfs/summermag08.pdf> and by going to www.heifer.org.)

One major aspect of Heifer's fundraising is devoted to the gift of animals, and the training to care for them, to people in both the United States and around the world. This gift helps the recipients to achieve self-reliance. They provide a steady supply of nutrition in the form of products like milk and eggs and a dependable source of income from the sale of products like wool, honey and produce. Finally, the renewed hope within a community when offspring are passed from family to family is huge. By partnering with this organization, from our youngest to our most mature, we can learn, grow and show how much we care.

Though we are still in the planning stage, we wanted to let you know what we are thinking, for we would like to ask your help. Our goal is that our children raise money by providing a service, or a sacrifice. It may involve doing chores at home and receiving a fair payment – by reading a number of books for pledges by family members – or by giving up regular stops at Starbucks or McDonalds and offering the money saved. They may be part of a classroom endeavor like weaving bracelets or making bead necklaces and selling them at a reasonable cost, or making cookies for a bake sale. Their grade may decide to offer a service at school, like scraping snow and ice off cars at the end of a winter day. The brainstorming will take place in the classroom among your children and their peers, but our hope is that you will also embrace our vision of meaningful service.

We will kick off this initiative in a few weeks when our middle school students will share their experience at our Tuesday assembly. The middle school JOOI Club and the intermediate school ISAC leadership group will manage the logistical issues. There will be a bulletin board dedicated to visually showing our progress in a barnyard way, and you could mention this letter, which might spark a preliminary discussion of what service and sacrifice are all about, as well as why the purchase of a goat, a hive of bees or a llama can forever change lives.