

# Can tabs for kids

Local elementary students raise funds for Sunrise Fund

By JENNETT MERIDEN RUSSELL

Kreamer Street Elementary School students are flipping their lids over a new fundraising effort that brings awareness to children with cancer. Dubbed "Can Tabs for Kids," the project involves students collecting hoards of tabs off of their soda and pet food cans to raise money for the Sunrise Fund, which helps support the pediatric oncology program at Stony Brook University Medical Center.

Those tabs are then brought to Gershow Recycling, which is paying out \$.55 for every pound of aluminum collected. The local scrap metal dealer is also matching each dollar raised, up to \$5,000.

Kreamer Street student Emma Hoeffner said she feels she is helping make a difference in the lives of children with cancer simply by collecting can tabs.

"It is very nice to help other kids," Emma, 8, said. "It feels good knowing I can make difference. I am collecting can tabs daily."

Sean Clark, principal of Kreamer Street Elementary School, said he and his students are very proud to bring "Can Tabs for Kids" into the school. In addition to raising money for the Sunrise Fund, Clark said students are bringing awareness and hope to other children who have been, or will be, diagnosed with cancer.

"This is a worthy cause and we look forward to working with Gershow Recycling in the fight against childhood cancer," Clark said.

Jonathan Abrams, manager of Gershow Recycling, said he hopes that the "Can Tabs for Kids" program will continue to expand to local businesses and government agencies.

He added that Stony Brook is a charity worth its weight in aluminum can tabs.

"Stony Brook University Pediatric Center is a wonderful place," Gershow said. "Everyone should get a chance to meet the staff and see the work they are doing there."

Maria Marks, a 10-year-old William Floyd student who was diagnosed with liver cancer at the tender age of just 2 weeks old, created "Can Tabs for Kids" last year.

The small girl, who underwent numerous chemotherapy sessions as well as having 25 percent of her liver reformed, said she feels empathy for children



Being joined by some of the students from Kreamer Street Elementary School are (left to right): Jonathan Abrams, manager, Gershow Recycling; Cara Giannillo, school transition and re-entry coordinator, Stony Brook University Medical Center; Sean Clark, principal, Kreamer Street Elementary School; and Peter and Nancy Marks, parents of William Floyd Elementary School student Maria Marks, who inspired the expanding "Can Tabs for Kids" program.

dealing with cancer and its treatment, which can sometimes do damage of its own.

In Maria's case, the constant exposure to the radiation resulted in her losing hearing in both ears and now she must wear hearing aids. But, her cancer has since been in remission.

Maria said she feels lucky to have beaten cancer and wanted to share her good fortune with other children battling cancer.

"We didn't really take Maria seriously in the beginning when she came to us with the idea about 'Can Tabs for Kids,'" said Maria's mother Nancy. "But, she was like, 'I really want to do this. I want to make a difference. I want to help kids out.'"

In the first year, William Floyd Elementary students managed to collect 700,000 tabs, which weighed in at 460 pounds. At 55 cents a pound, students raked in just over \$250. Taking into account the money donated by Gershow, the total for the tabs was just over \$500.

"We also received \$2,500 in donations,"

added William Floyd Elementary School Principal Keith Fascia. "Maria has worked very hard in sending out letters and did whatever it took to make this project happen."

Nancy Marks said that people as far away as Pennsylvania are collecting can tabs for the cause. Anyone who has collected can tabs can call Marks at 772-1900, and she or her husband will come pick the tabs up.

Fascia said his school has already collected 600,000 tabs, and there is still six months to go to the donation date.

"We'll have over one million come June," Fascia said.

Maria said she was surprised by the amount of people jumping onto the program she came up with.

"I never knew that the program would actually get bigger and bigger every day, every week, every year," Maria said. "I'd like to see everyone in Suffolk County participating."

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