

Money for mattresses May 19, 2008



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SUTHERLIN — Noah Avery wanted to give back to his community, but he found door after door slammed on him because of his age. He learned that charitable organizations around town just weren't set up to use the services of a 12-year-old.

The fifth-grader at West Intermediate School wondered if he might be able to help out in a different manner after he read a Thanksgiving Day story in *The News-Review* that detailed a local couple's efforts to assist orphanages in Mexico.

Avery spoke to Tom and Donelle Manton, who operate the Tres Islas Orphanage Fund to benefit orphans in Mazatlan. He found out there was a dire need for new mattresses at one of the four orphanages for which the Tyee couple provide money and supplies.

Avery then set up a fundraising drive at his school. At a school assembly, Noah spoke and showed photos of old mattresses at the Orfanatorio Mazatlan, founded in 1902. The mattresses were at least 15 years old and were in bad condition.

"I also put up posters to mark what we made," he said.

He also enlisted other students to help him.

"I wanted to help with the mattresses," said sixth-grader Kylee Carson, 11, who donated money she had collected baby-sitting. "We sleep in our beds every night and they don't have any good mattresses."

Students dropped nickels, dimes, quarters and dollar bills into buckets placed in each of the classrooms. After six weeks, Noah had raised more than \$1,000.

"I was very thankful that everyone at school helped," Noah said.

Robert Freeman, the school's principal, said he was proud of Noah and the other students for taking part in what was a very valuable project. Having Noah address his fellow students before and after the project also furthered the school's educational mission.

"The process was very educational for Noah and the other kids," Freeman said.

Noah and his parents, Gordon and Lisa Avery, along with his older brother, Craig, went to Mexico over spring break and personally delivered 30 new mattresses to the 30 children at Orfanatorio Mazatlan. Noah's donation, along with those from other benefactors, helped pay for all of them, along with new blanket and sheet sets brought by other donors.

The children, Noah said, were both grateful and excited about getting the mattresses.

"Some of those kids wouldn't even get off the beds. They were bouncing on them and feeling the blankets," Donelle Manton said. "The children all clapped for Noah."

Even the old mattresses were recycled. They were taken to a facility that helps homeless people battle drug and alcohol addictions.

The school exercise prompted other students to seek out ways to better their community.

Lucas Erickson, an 11-year-old sixth-grader, said he has begun picking up cans and other trash that he sees when he's out riding his bicycle.

"It also made me think about other projects," he said.