

Student's cupcake sales raise thousands for orphans

Yellowknife student and family drum up \$33,000 for Mazatlan children

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Cole Philipp may be young but the 14-year-old student is showing that anybody, regardless of age, can make a difference in the lives of the less fortunate.

Philipp began raising money for the Tres Islas Orphanage Fund in 2010 as part of a school project and has since raised \$33,285 for the group. The fund supports six orphanages in Mazatlan, Mexico, with food, clothing, school supplies and medical supplies.

About 24 per cent of the money - \$8,031 - of the money has come from the sales of cupcakes, with the rest through private and corporate donations, barbecues, craft sales, and other events around Yellowknife.

"I just started asking for donations, e-mailing people, doing cupcake fundraisers and a bunch of different fundraisers for my project," said Philipp.

"I had visited Mazatlan a few times and I just noticed how much need there was and how people, like little kids who are younger than me, had to beg to eat or sell flowers or whatever they can do to try and get enough to eat that night," said Philipp.

"So I noticed the amount of need and I decided to do something about it."

Tomorrow, Cole - with the help of his family, friends and Sir John Franklin Culinary Arts class - will be delivering 948 cupcakes to businesses around town. At \$2 each, he expects to raise another \$1,896 from the cupcake sale.



Cole Philipp, centre, with Sir John Franklin School culinary arts teacher Travis Stewart and his mom, Stef Philipp, in the school's culinary arts classroom on Monday. The Grade 9 student has raised more than \$33,000 for orphanages in Mexico since he started fundraising - often through bake sales - two years ago. - Kevin Allerston/NNSL photo

As a Grade 7 student at Range Lake North School, Philipp's class watched the 2000 movie Pay It Forward, and was then assigned to come up with a plan for how to make the world a better place.

"I mean, it was a school project at first, but then it really changed my life. It opened my eyes to new ideas and just to see the difference between their lives and my life. It's kind of unbelievable how they can be so happy when they have so little when I have so much," said Philipp.

The fact that he would be involved in such an effort comes as little surprise to parents Jeff and Stef, who say he has always had a generous nature.

"He's got a huge heart, for sure. I think that we've always known that he's a pretty mature and pretty aware young man and I'm glad that he's recognizing that he really needs to do something to help out, so I'm very happy that he's taken this on," said his mom Stef.

"I think it's great. He's always been very empathetic. I mean, he is very caring, it does move him truly," said his dad Jeff.

About \$10,000 has already gone to the orphanages, and when he and his mother go to Mexico April 17, they will present the fund with the additional \$23,285 that has been raised.

The cupcakes and items for bake sales were made with the help of his family, friends and teachers, and the 948 cupcakes to be delivered tomorrow were baked by Sir John Franklin teacher Travis Stewart's culinary arts class, with Stewart using his connections with Skills NWT and Food Rescue to have the ingredients donated and also donated ingredients from the school.

"It's a fantastic project. Absolutely incredible," said Stewart. "And for somebody Cole's age to raise more than \$30,000 for such a worthy cause, it's just incredible to think of what he's going to be able to continue doing."