

Brownies turn into dollars which help the blind

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School children at Redlands Christian had a special reason to be pushing "brownies." It was an effort to raise money. According to officials of Redlands Christian School, the effort is being taken on by the kindergartners, who were trying to raise enough money to sponsor the purchase of a harness for a guide dog that will someday serve the blind.

Canines from Guide Dogs of the Desert fascinate kindergartners from Redlands Christian School. The students are selling brownies to purchase a special harness for guide dogs."



"We love working with Guide Dogs of the Desert," kindergarten teacher, Betsy Jeffers said in the school's announcement of the effort. "Last year we were able to raise enough money to sponsor the harness and the training for the dog and dog owner."

She recalled one little boy who donated his tooth fairy money to Guide Dogs of the Desert. "Last year, another boy emptied his entire piggy bank and brought in \$50."

Kindergarten students ask questions of Sandy Esposito, right, and her guide dog, Bobby, as she demonstrates what they can do together. Guide Dogs of the Desert is based in Palm Springs. The not-for-profit organization provides free training and equipment to the blind relying on donations and volunteers for its operations. According to the organization, a dog will typically receive 8-10 months of training before graduating from the program to become a service dog.

Earlier this month, Sandy Esposito, a recent graduate of the training program, visited the kindergarten classes along with her dog, Bobby. The students were mesmerized as Esposito showed them how Bobby helps her navigate around buildings, and up and down stairs. Esposito answered questions and taught the students not to pet a service dog when it is working.

School officials said each class chooses a service activity to do or organization to partner with for the year. Some of the organizations involved include the Ronald McDonald House, Helping Hands Pantry and the Lutheran Brail Society in Yucaipa. The school's service theme is SURF, an acronym for Serving with Understanding, Respect, and Faith.

"The students have really taken on an attitude of others first," said Principal Kathy Barr. "They've started looking outside of themselves in a lot of ways."

