

# PALO ALTO DAILY NEWS

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Thursday Feb 28



Konstandinos Goumenidis / Daily News

Ten-year-olds Alison Mody, left, and Mia Geiduschek talk about their science assignment during class on Thursday at Keys School in Palo Alto. Since the first grade, students have been using their birthdays as fundraisers for local charities such as the Blind Babies Foundation.

With the encouragement of homeroom teacher Gigi Hindin, the class has raised money for several charities this year. Earlier this month, they presented a check for nearly \$1,200 to the Oakland-based Blind Babies Foundation.

In part, the effort started with a group of nine students with birthdays during the winter months who since the first grade have chosen to give donations instead of presents at their birthday parties, Hindin said.

"I like it because I know I'm helping some other people," said Alison Mody, 10. "It's kind of close to Christmas so you still get presents."

The giving became a class effort this year when Hindin had students vote on a "service learning" project. By selling candy canes for a quarter apiece during the holidays, the students raised \$250 alone for the Blind Babies Foundation.

"That's a lot of candy canes," Hindin said. Donations also came in later from winter birthday parties.

Then, when school resumed after winter break, a student who had been traveling during the holidays showed a video of a class of children in southern India who had no shoes.

Within a week and a half, the class had raised enough money to buy 100 pairs of shoes and sent them along with leftover funds to the students.

"For the Indian kids with feet, we did a bake sale," explained Isabel Demiroz, 9.

Nick Dorsey, 9, who baked red velvet cupcakes for the occasion, said his favorite part was "probably selling all the stuff."

Hindin said fourth grade is a good time to focus on community service and philanthropy.

"Kids are beginning to develop their own sense of identity," she said. But it can be difficult for 9- and 10-year-olds to be effective in philanthropy, she said.

"Usually, you have to wait until you're older," she said.

So Hindin tries to help the students pick causes they can relate to. Last year her class worked with a forestry organization and adopted a baby seal.

Mody's mother, Maria Theresa Dulay, said she thinks the school's focus on community service provides "a powerful opportunity for kids to learn lifelong lessons of kindness and generosity."

"It is rewarding to see her class embrace fundraising from the word 'go,'" Dulay said.

Hindin already has plans for another project this spring, which she said may involve animals - "maybe elephants in Thailand," she said.

Back at the whale worksheets, Sarah McLeod, 10, summarized the class' strategy in

## Learning the value of giving

Fourth-graders raise money for Bay Area charities

By **Kristina Peterson / Daily News Staff Writer**

Thursday morning, the fourth-grade class at Palo Alto's private Keys School eagerly paused while completing a worksheet on whales and pinnipeds to discuss its budding philanthropy efforts.

"It feels good helping people who don't have all the stuff they want," said Dimitris Antoniadis, 10. "It made us feel really special, like grown-ups."

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their previous fundraising efforts.

"In all of them, we didn't keep the money," she said.

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