

Article published Mar 21, 2010

Penny Drive:

- Total: \$12,077.47
- Schools: \$10,696.51
- UCFS: \$1,059.03
- Businesses/outside donations: \$321.93
- Highest amount raised: Greenville School \$1,838.19
- Highest average per student raised: Deborah Tenant-Zinewicz School, \$6.10 per student.

Penny drive raises \$12,000 for Haiti quake relief

By [Claire Bessette](#) Day Staff Writer

Norwich - At the start of last week, Norwich Human Services officials were putting out the call for donations to a local Haitian relief fund that could help Norwich Haitian families in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in their homeland.

By the end of the week, Human Services Director Beverly Goulet was celebrating the success of the public

school system's annual penny drive, dubbed "Pennies for Haiti" this year. The most successful penny drive in the program's history yielded \$12,077.47, including contributions from partner United Community and Family Services and local businesses.

The penny drive usually is held during February in honor of Abraham Lincoln's birthday - his visage is on the penny - but this year, the drive started immediately after the Jan. 12 earthquake. School and UCFS officials decided to split the proceeds, with half to be donated to the Norwich-based Haitian Health Foundation and half to local Haitian relief programs through Norwich Human Services.

"I was thrilled," Goulet said Friday after learning of the pending donation. She expects to receive the funds March 31. "I thanked the schools and UCFS on behalf of our Haitian families. We couldn't be happier. That's an important fund to help our local Haitian families."

During a meeting of the local Haitian Relief Committee Monday, social services supervisor Lee Ann Gomes said the department recently received two letters from families who hope to bring immediate relatives to Norwich to escape the earthquake devastation. In one letter, a father who works at MGM Grand at Foxwoods asked for help to bring his two young children to Norwich.

The agency also hopes to help subsidize application fees for local undocumented Haitians and those whose temporary visas have expired who are seeking federal Temporary Protective Status to remain in the United States.

Greenville School, which has 27 Haitian students, led all schools in the penny drive, raising \$1,838.19, an average of \$5.70 per student. Fourth-grade teacher Matt Fiano, coordinator of the school's drive, said he announced the penny drive on the school's TV broadcast each morning and let the students do the work.

"We have a large Haitian population in our school, so obviously it was close to home for them," said Fiano.