

Penny Harvest

By Tom Doggett, Children's Advocate

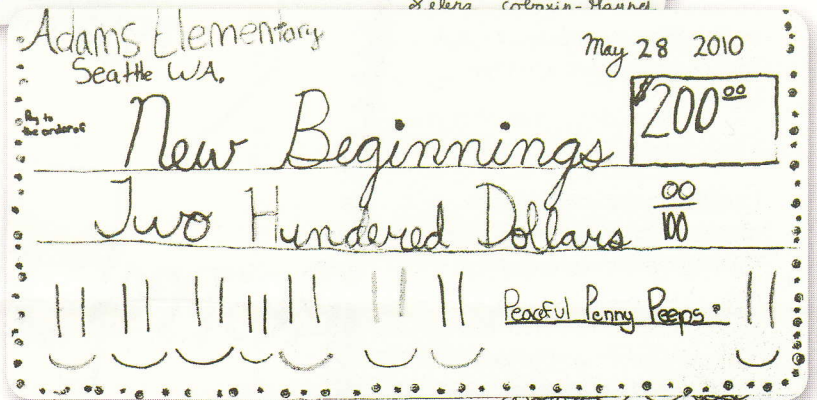
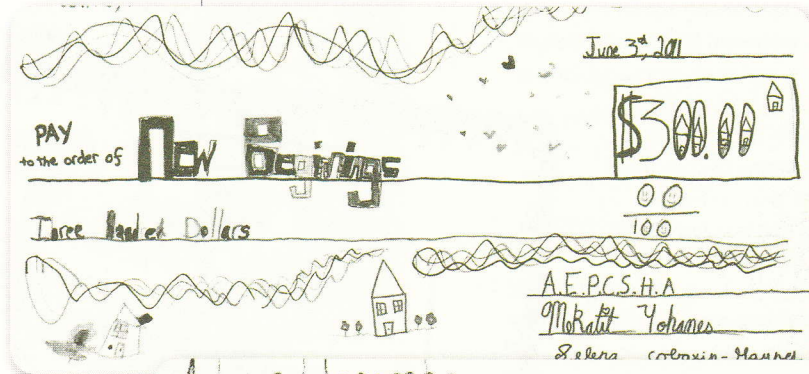
It's never too early to start kids off in activism.

That's what the Penny Harvest, an educational program designed to encourage fundraising and service, does every year in schools around the country.

Unlike many other school-based fundraising programs, Penny Harvest puts the decisions in the hands of a group of peer leaders, who go out on their own to find organizations that they think are worthy. From the get-go, the kids are involved, and they work both their minds and their hearts to select an appropriate charity, and then champion the cause they have

selected. And because coins are the currency, the whole school can get involved. Without breaking the piggy bank students can contribute out of their own pockets: even a penny makes a small splash.

For the past two years the students (ranging in ages from 8-12 years old) at Adams Elementary in Seattle have selected New Beginnings as one of their fundraising targets. The first time around in 2010, one particular student, Lyla,



found a new organization that was a little bit different than causes like poverty, animal welfare, and the environment, which the students usually selected. In the words of the school's staff organizer, Bobbi Windus, Lyla "stressed that New Beginnings provided critical services to women and children," and urged her peers to consider. As a committee, they decided that New Beginnings was a worthy cause for their fundraising.

When 2011 rolled around the student leaders remembered New Beginnings and once again they selected the organization as one of their causes. Bobbi never ceased to be amazed at the children's passion: When the decisions were put in their hands, they took the process very seriously, and thought long and hard about how to allocate their funds. Jessica has moved on to middle school, but thanks to her (and with help from Penny Harvest), an entire community of students is familiar with New Beginnings. And hopefully, when they all move on in life, they will remember that they each have the power to make the world a better place.

