

# Counting pennies will help feed hungry in county

BY LAURIE HUMPHREY  
STAFF WRITER

A penny donation doesn't do a lot of good by itself, but a penny donation by each of the 2,443 elementary students in the Bloomfield Hills School District would significantly impact the Oakland County Food Bank's mission and assist more than 25,000 Oakland County children living below the poverty level.

Bloomfield Hills is one of 19 area school districts that have banded together to assist between 50,000 and 70,000 people that depend on the Oakland County Food Bank each month.

"Not many people are far from being in need at some time in their life," said Jamie Rabinowitz, "Kids Can" project coordinator. "There is no real thing such as job security."

Other participating districts covered by the Observer & Ecen-

trics are: Avondale, Farmington, Walled Lake, Troy, Lake Orion, Birmingham, Clarkston and West Bloomfield.

The purpose of the fund-raiser is two-fold: to raise money and to show children they can help less-fortunate people. Rabinowitz said there is no monetary goal.

"We are most interested in having young people know there are people who need help," she said, adding it was important their

children feel as if they did their part to help those in need.

Students have collected and donated money for the county Food Bank in years past. However, nothing was organized county-wide. Rabinowitz changed that.

"It was so popular (in the school districts) which were collecting) that we decided to create our own for Oakland County," she said.

This is the first year for the

"Kids Can Penny Drive Campaign." It runs through March 31.

Elementary students, the only level participating in the penny drive, deposit their change into classroom jugs. The money is then counted, by students in the county's autistic program, and used by the Food Bank to buy food and toiletries at a discounted rate.

Barb Browne, community relations coordinator for Bloomfield Hills Schools and a key person in advocating the districtwide Penny

Drive program, expressed the importance of the program. "Each school in the Bloomfield Hills District is an integral component of our immediate community as well as the greater metropolitan community. Students in the district give back to the community by becoming involved in projects such as the penny drive."

If the penny drive is as successful as organizers are hoping, there is a plan to expand the program to middle school and eventually the high schools.

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