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## Raise It to Give It Local kids step up their charity efforts

By Sophie Braccini



Lafayette kids participate in a triathlon to support Afghani children. Photo provided

When Budd MacKenzie entered the Stanley Middle School gym April 13, the hundreds of students who had assembled knew the gist of the stories they were about to hear. For years now, MacKenzie had enlisted them in supporting the Trust in Education Foundation and the Lafayette teens wanted to hear news about the Afghani street children that they've been supporting since their elementary school years. This time, however, MacKenzie told them something different: He didn't want them to ask their parents for money to support the children of Afghanistan; he wanted them to earn that money.

The Lafayette lawyer had already presented this new 'earn to give' strategy at the elementary school level, and the challenge was met with great enthusiasm. While MacKenzie knew kids were imaginative, he was still surprised when two fifth-graders from Springhill Elementary School came up with something quite different: a virtual triathlon.

"I thought it was a great idea when I heard that Mr. MacKenzie wanted us to earn the money," said fifth-grader Spencer Tompkins, "and I started looking for different ways to earn it. Then I went to my friend Bradley Sides' home,

and he thought about the virtual triathlon."

To participate in the virtual triathlon, kids signed up online at [www.crowdrise.com/virtualtriathlon/fundraiser/bradleyandspencer](http://www.crowdrise.com/virtualtriathlon/fundraiser/bradleyandspencer) and either participated in the different local organized events, or vouched to do it on their own.

"Bradley and Spencer researched the appropriate distances for a kids' triathlon," said Spencer's mother and Springhill third-grade teacher Stephanie Tompkins. "Bike five miles, run three miles and swim ten laps. Kids could do it anytime, anywhere before March 30th." They also organized local events: Biking on Sunday, March 11 at 2 p.m. at the Stanley parking lot, swimming the same day at 3 p.m. at Springbrook Pool, and running on Sunday, March 25 at 2 p.m. from the Stanley parking lot.

"We wanted to raise six hundred dollars," said Bradley. "That takes one kid off the streets of Afghanistan and sends him to school for one year. We didn't know if we would be able to raise that much." Money is raised by adults sponsoring children who participated. "I thought this was a great way to involve distant family members such as grandparents," said Bradley's mother. More than 25 kids in five different states participated, their ages ranging from 6 to 13 years old. When the triathlon ended, the two fifth-graders had raised \$1,000.

"We gave Mr. MacKenzie the money that we earned and he'll go to Afghanistan two or three times a year to see how the money is used and follow up with the children," said Spencer.

"Earning the money they gave added meaning," Bradley's mother said. "I was also impressed by the way they organized the whole fund raiser and by the support they got from their classmates and the community. For example, the Karr family sponsored every Springhill fifth-grader who participated in the race."

At the end of his Stanley presentation, MacKenzie told the students about Spencer and Bradley's achievement, as well as what other children are doing to 'earn' their giving, from bake sales to chores to lemonade stands.

"Club Grow on campus is preparing a series of fundraisers to support Trust in Education," said Stanley volunteer Kit Bozzini. "They are organizing a teacher/student volleyball tournament, they will have a drink-selling booth at the cultural fair on May 5th, and are also planning a dance with a two dollar ticket price, with all proceeds going to the Lafayette non-profit."

According to MacKenzie his non-profit is able to keep 75 kids off the streets of Kabul where they had to beg to support their families. His group also supports 28 teachers in Afghan villages who are teaching a grand total of 1,407 children, 749 of which are girls. "A large portion of those girls would not be getting an education otherwise," he said.

For more information about Trust in Education go to [www.trustineducation.org](http://www.trustineducation.org).

Reach the reporter at: [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

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