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BFL News and Views

February 2012



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Products are a great way to support any bucketfilling initiative, whether at home or in the classroom. For example, t-shirts for parents as well as for the children reflect bucketfilling unity throughout the family!

Heartspeak is the exclusive source of Bucketfillers For Life products and more.

- Posters
- Pencils
- Classroom Learning Package
- Bracelets
- Sunglasses
- Piggy Banks
- Backpacks
- T-shirts
- Coffee Mug
- More!

Be sure to also get your copy of *True Bucketfilling Stories: Legacies of Love*, by Stacey A. Lundgren.

Empowering Students to Keep the Message Alive at School

By Kelly Nickel, M. Ed - BFL Regional Director, Western U.S.

Cindy Venolia, principal at Stone Ranch Elementary School in San Diego, California created a great program for keeping the "Fill more, Dip less" bucketfilling message alive at her school by starting a student group called the "BFF Club" (which stands for "Bucket Filler Friends"). She started the club in tandem with our visit to her school in September 2011 and it has been going strong ever since. This group of 3rd-5th graders meets monthly for the purpose of making bucketfilling a site-wide priority.

As Cindy puts it, "The real benefit to the children and our school has come from the creation of a shared vocabulary among the students about what it means to choose to be a bucketfiller every day. The BFF club helps our students connect the metaphor to real-life experiences here at school."

Helping others feel welcome is an important part of being a bucketfiller, and one project that the BFF club has successfully imple-

mented was the creation of a spiral-bound New Student Guide for new students that includes recommendations on ways to best navigate being a new student at the school. The guide also includes information for families about the surrounding community including resources for fun

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Cindy Venolia, Principal

places to go and fun things to do. In addition, BFF club members provide complete school tours for new students.

Learning the benefits of serving others is important to becoming a bucketfiller, and in November and December the BFF club completed a hugely successful food drive to benefit local charities. According to Cindy, "It was great! It completely blew away everyone's expectations." The

club is in the process of deciding on their next service project.

Learning to share the message of kindness, empathy and respect with others helps spread the message out into the world. The 4th and 5th graders in the BFF club are currently working on a play from the Character Counts program and will be performing it for the younger students at the school. This helps to connect the younger students with the older students and allow the older students to serve as positive role models for the whole school.

We here at Bucketfillers for Life never cease to be amazed at the many creative and positive ways that sharp administrators and educators can tap into the power of the bucket and dipper metaphor to improve social and emotional learning outcomes for their students. Thank you, Cindy Venolia, and the entire staff and student body of Stone Ranch Elementary for all you are doing to make a positive difference in the lives of children.

Good News of the Month

This month's good news comes from CNN

'Secret agent' is on a mission: Spreading kindness

(CNN) -- For the past year, Laura Miller has been living a double life of sorts: administrative assistant by day, secret agent of kindness by night.

The 32-year-old Duquesne University employee only recently revealed herself as the woman behind "Secret Agent L," a giver of random acts of kindness that has been brightening the days of unsuspecting Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, residents since July 2009.

The project began, Miller says, with the birthday of one of her blog readers who had become a close friend. But instead of asking for the latest book on the best-seller list or an iTunes gift card, the friend suggested Miller perform an act of kindness in her name.

So with a single, lavender hydrangea bloom tucked under the windshield wipers of a random vehicle, Secret Agent L was born.

Miller used her friend's birthday idea to launch a new blog documenting subsequent secret missions, posting photos of the gifts -- all inexpensive to fit within her administrative assistant salary --

that have included \$5 Starbucks gift cards, a roll of quarters at a laundromat and decorative cards emblazoned with uplifting quotes.

The gifts are all tagged with a business card printed in "secret agent-y" type, she laughs. Her tagline: "All-Around Swell Chick."

The blog -- with the help of Twitter -- took off, and Miller now has about 80 "Affiliated Agents" across the United States and abroad who are implementing the idea in their cities.

Her favorite mission came on Valentine's Day when she took blank notecards and wrote inspirational messages about how the holiday "isn't just about romantic love."

"I wanted people to know that today's the day you can celebrate love for your own family, your own friends and your own life," she says. "I left them all over the city, and I just thought it felt so good."

She tries to do at least one mission a week, but notes "if I had the money, I would do it every single day," calling the project "one of the greatest honors of my life."

Miller says she decided to reveal her double life at a coming-out party last month to help advance her charitable efforts. The party was a fundraiser for the National Alliance on Mental Illness, an or-

ganization "near and dear" to Miller, she told HLN's "Prime News" on Wednesday. More than \$1,500 was raised, she said.

"I think people are so hungry to not feel alone and not feel weird and that they don't matter," she says. "I think people really want to feel valued and noticed because there's so much hurt out there and my project is an attempt to heal some of that."

She hopes her anonymous gifts will help at least bring smiles to those going through a tough time -- though she never sticks around to see who finds them.

"I think that's part of the fun -- it's just sort of putting the gift there and leaving, and just knowing that somebody's going to get it and it doesn't matter who," she says.

She often receives e-mails afterwards from gift recipients to her secret agent account.

"One of the sort of themes that I've noticed in these e-mails is that they all seem to find things on days when they're having a really bad day," she says.

Mission: Accomplished.