



Trim-A-Tree for Baby

By Jacqueline Holmes

A core group of students annually organize a school-wide campaign to raise funds used to purchase critical items for teen parents who are homeless and their children.

Our annual "Trim-A-Tree for Baby" campaign addresses the community need of teen parents who are homeless and their infants. This project was an outgrowth of other projects that addressed the needs of youth and children who are homeless throughout our city and state.

Through the various activities connected to the project, students met the following curriculum objectives: writing to inform, writing to persuade, and writing to express an idea.

Daily messages and announcements made by students during the campaign fostered ongoing reflection. Students also answered questions on a pre-printed "reflection sheet" designed specifically for this project. Posters, which were created and displayed throughout the school, also reminded students of the activity and encouraged school-wide participation.

The students wrote letters to the principal requesting permission to have a fund-raiser during lunch periods so that the money raised could be used to buy items needed by the young people who are homeless. Students wrote slogans, jingles, and announcements about this service-learning activity that were read over the schools' intercom system daily. Several students engaged in the creation and decoration of ornaments and/or helped sell them.

Students also wrote letters about the project to parents and various community organizations enlisting their support. Among them was the Hampden community Center.

Planning for this service-learning activity took place in several stages through meetings with guidance facilitators to discuss the project and have them decide tasks and duties, as well as meetings with teams of teachers.

The students did research about people who are homeless in the area and the needs of infants and toddlers. The information students gathered was shared with classmates on the various teams. Students also made enthusiastic announcements about the activity, prior to getting started, to gain peer and teacher support.