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# School Notes: At EHS, lessons on poverty, relief work

By **CATHERINE BAUM**  
Staff Writer

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Thursday, February 18, 2010

EASTHAMPTON - Fundraisers are typically more successful when participants truly care for the cause.

That is why Easthampton High School librarian Robin Rowe presented high school students with an understanding of Haiti - before and after the Jan. 12 earthquake hit it - during the schoolwide Red Cross fundraiser raffle. About 300 students attended her lesson in the school's little theatre, which included a video montage and presentation by Paige Thayer, fundraising coordinator for the Pioneer Valley Red Cross.

"The more I questioned them about Haiti, the more I realized they didn't know," Rowe said. "It means more if you know what you're doing."

Using the online service Animoto, Rowe painted a picture of Haiti's hillside community, presidential palace and downtown shopping in Port-au-Prince before and after the earthquake, she said, "to give them an idea of the severity of the damage in the city."

Also shown were thousands of covered dead bodies, Rowe said, "to reflect the reality of the situation."

To teach students about the progress, images were shown of volunteers helping children get food and water, people carrying the injured to receive medical care and rescue workers finding and looking for Haitians in rubble.

Before the earthquake even hit Haiti, Rowe taught, 80 percent of its people were below the poverty line while 50 percent of the population was illiterate. She told students there is an opportunity to be had.

"This is a building point for them - they can become a better Haiti than they were before," Rowe said. "We can help them build a strong foundation."

Meanwhile, Thayer explained how the school's fundraiser dollars will be used in Haiti. The \$1,700 raised goes directly to Red Cross sites already in the country, empowering the system of care. Thayer told Rowe she has received checks from multiple schools, but the effort at Easthampton High School was unique.

"She was very impressed we had an educational piece to our fundraiser - not a lot of other schools did it," Rowe said.

Rowe was on to something, for the money jar filled quicker after the lesson.



KATHLEEN DUNCAN

Joan Bonsignore, who on Friday had been displaying the gift baskets for the raffle to benefit Haiti, is taken aback to discover she has won the basket in her hand.



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"They were more enthusiastic after the presentation; we had kids grabbing more tickets and saying '#I need more, I need more'," Rowe said.

On Friday, the fundraiser's organizers in the school's Key Club, National Honor Society and Model United Nations distributed prize baskets to raffle winners at the student/faculty basketball game (It should be noted the seniors won). Most prize winners were "in-house" at Easthampton High School, according to library paraprofessional Carrie Hague. History teacher Kelly Brown won the grand prize, a Wii, donated by Shelley Wilton of Wellness Within Chiropractic.

### **Kiwanis eyes Key Club**

The Kiwanis club that serves Easthampton, Southampton and Westhampton is looking to create another junior Kiwanis group - the Key Club - at Hampshire Regional High School, according to Kiwanis member Shelley Wilton. Kiwanis already partners with the Key Club at Easthampton High School, with Wilton serving as the liaison. Every July, Key Club members help to sell water and clean up at the Kiwanis Salutes America Fireworks Festival at Daley and Galbraith Fields. Kiwanis regularly writes checks for the student organization's fundraisers, too. Wilton said starting a Key Club at Hampshire Regional High School will create "strengths in numbers."

"The more people you have, the more you can do," Wilton said. "Starting people off at a young age and teaching them to raise money for a cause in the greater community is really important."

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