

Seneca fundraiser targets Australian animals affected by bushfires

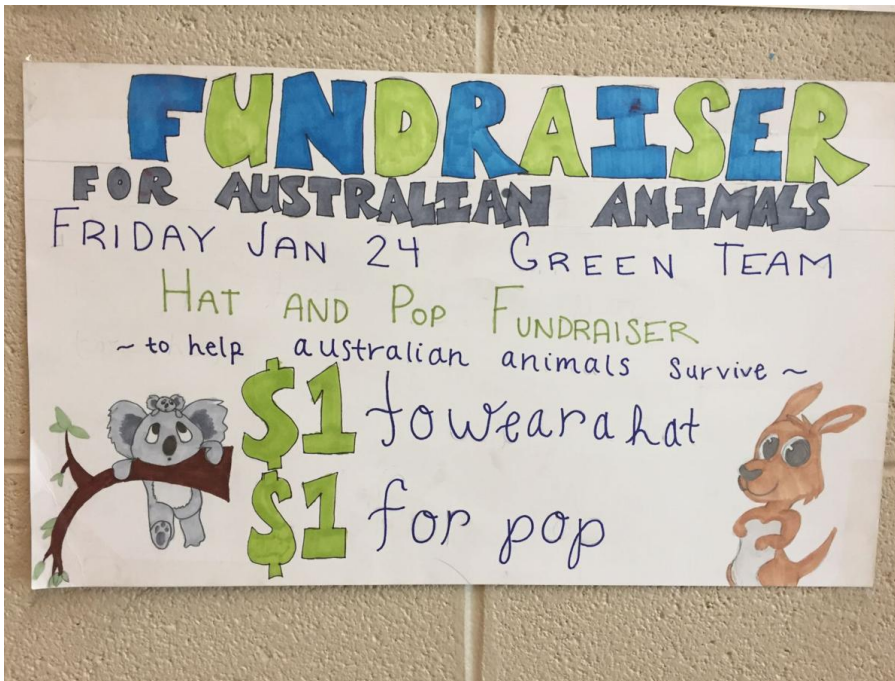
Green Team students raised over \$700 in one day

- By Nicole Tuttle For MediaNews Group
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Seneca Middle School students raised over \$700, donated to the World Wildlife Fund and earmarked for Australian bushfire assistance. Pictured are Seneca Green Team students posing with a symbolic check representing their fundraising efforts.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SENECA MIDDLE SCHOOL



Seneca Middle School in Macomb Township recently raised over \$700 in one day to assist animals affected by Australia bushfires.

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Lovers of Australian animals were recently excepted from the classroom rules against pop drinking or hat wearing at Seneca Middle School during a half school day.

Seneca Middle School's Green Team led a fundraiser focused on assisting animals recently affected by the devastating bushfires that have swept through Australia. Seneca speech pathologist and Green Team co-sponsor Cheri Hegler said students selected the cause during a regular club meeting.

"We have meetings usually two times per month, one to two times per month. In the meetings we try to hit on different issues, not the same ones all the time," Hegler said. "We were talking about environmental issues facing the world, and talking about hurricanes and tornadoes. And one of the kids said that a natural disaster doesn't necessarily have to be that to destroy an area, not necessarily a tornado or hurricane. It could be something like the wildfires."

This led to a discussion on the number of animals that had been killed, displaced or left without food and shelter in Australia due to the bushfires.

"They got really fired up and wanted to do something," Hegler said.

The team elected to raise as much as they could in as short a time as possible at no cost with a day exempt from the normal rules forbidding pop and hats in classrooms. Jan. 24 was selected as the date as it was a half-day on the school schedule. Students could pay \$1 to bring a pop to their first hour classroom, or pay \$1 to wear a hat to their first hour class.

Green Team members promoted the event at the Macomb Township school by creating fliers and posters as well as speaking to classmates about the fundraiser and its cause. The event proved successful, raising \$756 donated to the World Wildlife Fund and earmarked for Australian bushfire assistance, according to Hegler.

"The reason we chose that was not only did they rehabilitate animals that were injured, but they are also working on reforestation and restoring habitat," Hegler said.

The donation was made on Feb. 3 and to mark the occasion, team members posted a photo with a large mock check to the school website.

"Our purpose was letting kids realize that even they could make a difference, and that we are responsible for our environment outside of our immediate area, and we are all conservators of the Earth," Hegler said.

The Seneca Green Team consists of students committed to the environment and developing a greener school culture. This school year, there are 19 students in the club.

"There are no requirements except for interest in the environment and trying to help our local area with green initiatives," Hegler said.

The team's objectives are to raise awareness about the need to reduce, reuse and recycle in school and at home.

"Also, they are making students and staff members aware of environmental issues that are present in our local community and in the world," Hegler said.

Seneca is a part of the Macomb County Michigan Green Schools program and has participated since 2009. Michigan Green Schools is a non-profit agency that assists Michigan schools in achieving environmental goals such as protecting the air, land, water and animals of the state in addition to world outreach through good ecological practices. Educational stewardship is taught to students pre-K through 12th grade. Through the program, students help their schools to attain multiple levels of Michigan Green School certification by completing activities that are both educational and environmental.

Developing the fundraiser for Australian animals affected by the bushfires was an activity that Seneca students used to obtain points through the Green Schools program as it works towards maintaining its designation at the high Evergreen status, Hegler confirmed.