

EPS fundraising drive tops \$33,000

Student organizers stunned by \$11,000 Semiahmoo Rotary Club donation

by Tracy Holmes

Staff Reporter

Social walls came down and pockets emptied without hesitation in a mass tsunami relief fundraising effort at Elgin Park Secondary this week.

Results of the three-day drive—\$33,000 from students, staff and Semiahmoo Rotary Club members—blew organizers and donors away, and is likely a record on the Peninsula.

“I don’t even think I can talk,” a stunned Mark Worthing said Friday when he saw the grand total was enough to meet their overall goal of rebuilding a school in Phuket, Thailand.

“My God...it’s an interesting feeling I have right now.”

Worthing, one of the fundraising efforts’ drivers, knew when he left school Thursday more than \$17,000 had been raised Jan. 7, 10-11.

Tuesday alone, students and staff pulled together more than \$10,000. It was the last day the federal government would match donations.

What he and his peers didn’t know was that Thursday, after students had presented the results of their hard work to Semiahmoo Rotary Club members, the executive voted to top up the fund to \$33,000.

“It was really quite neat,” club past-president Gerry Swan said.

“They left early because they had to go back school. The executive decided, let’s do what we can to help them out. We all brought in loose change we had in our jam jars...wrote cheques.

“It shows you how quickly a community can rally around something.”

It all began with a simple idea to raise \$12,000 for tsunami relief by asking each student in Grades 8 - 12 to donate \$10. EPS student council members Dana Horrocks, Justine Clift and David Wen spear-headed the blitz, with an aim to have the money raised to beat the federal government’s cut-off for matching donations.

Posters advertising the idea, and photos depicting the devastation were plastered throughout the halls.

Students were encouraged to give what they’d spend at Starbucks or on lunch to the cause, or to choose a cheaper ski mountain and donate the money they saved on the lift ticket.

The response was heartening, with students opening their wallets right to the last minute of the drive.

“I was crazily overwhelmed,” Horrocks said.

“I thought, maybe somebody will bring their \$10. The amount of money that came in just floored me.”

Worthing said it was the first time he’s seen the school population so united.

“Not very often do social walls of high school come down,” he said.

“People stopped being students, and stopped being teachers, and were just people. There was nobody sarcastic, nobody joking.

“The response, for lack of a better adjective, was pretty beautiful.”

Swan said Rotary will ensure the money rebuilds a school. Students are already brainstorming what more they can do.