

Cutest Pet Contest

By Carol Ann Schaper

Students at Sykesville Middle School participate in a project that has become an annual event, The Cutest Pet Contest. This project raises money for the Humane Society. Students collect 60-70 pictures of pets from students within the school. The pictures are displayed during lunch shifts and students get to vote for their favorite pets by putting money in the plastic container under the picture of their favorite pet. Many parents visit the school during the week to see the animal pictures, but also to vote on their favorite pet. The funds raised by the project are used to help animal related causes.

Meet a recognized community need: This project recognizes a community need by developing character in students, developing business relationships, helping the community by promoting healthy animal care, and making a donation to an organization that cares for animals.

Achieve curricular objectives: This project meets curricular objectives by incorporating service and also consumerism. The students learn about advertising and money management within the FACS curriculum along with student service.

Reflect through the service-learning experience: To reflect on this activity, a representative from the Humane Society comes to the school to give a presentation for the students about the Humane Society and how their efforts help makes a difference for animals. One year the student raised enough money for a new sign for the Humane Society.

Develop student responsibility: Students are vital to the success of this project. During the project they are responsible for making sure that all lunch shifts have adequate staffing, setting up and taking down the displays, counting the money, cleaning up trash, advertising the project, collecting containers, and making signs. The students also have to develop a timeline to make sure the project will be completed by the end of the rotation of FACS. They also contact the Humane Society to set up a date for the presentation and to arrange to pick up pamphlets to pass out during the lunch shifts.

Establish community partnerships: This project has established partnerships with the Humane Society and Martin's Grocery Store, which donates the plastic containers to collect the money for each animal.

Plan ahead for service-learning: Before the students start a project, we review the 7 Best Practices for Service-Learning and the three-step process of service-learning.

Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service: The students decide what issues they want to work on and learn about the organizations in the community that supports that issue. Then students develop project ideas and a plan to implement their project.