

Young 'Vinnies' rally for Eric's cause

■ Kid-driven cause for Lent benefits the needy.

By **JOSEPH DITS**

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Some of the third-graders at St. Pius X Church would like peanut butter and jelly, please.

Not on a sandwich, not on a cracker. They'll take it in unopened jars, please.

They are bringing jars of the sweet spread and giving them to the St. Vincent de Paul Society of St. Joseph County.

It makes them think of lunch and the needy, who may not have enough for lunch, says Lisa Kochanowski, who does community relations for St. Vincent.

If their act of charity inspires you to do the same, it would be part of a trend. And the public is most welcome

How to be a copycat

Donations for the St. Vincent de Paul Society of St. Joseph County may be dropped off at the thrift store at 3408 Ardmore Trail, South Bend. Or, to make other arrangements, call (574) 251-4906.

to be copycats.

Food, clothing, furniture, appliances, beds and most anything else can be donated.

The kids at St. Anthony de Padua School are chipping in coins and dollars for St. Vincent when they have their weekly Masses at school.

They are among the 13 Catholic schools where students will be rounding up as many donations as possible for Lent, the 40-day season of fasting and prayer that leads up to Easter.

The project is called Eric's Promise. It's a tradition that began three years ago after Marian High School student Eric Henry started filling bags with clothes he no longer needed that he was going to donate to St. Vincent. It was Ash Wednesday. He told his mom that he wanted to be a more giving person.

Eric died the next day in a car crash. His classmates at Marian High School copied his generosity. Then other schools copied. Then more.

Find out more

For more about Eric's Promise, look for "Making a Difference for Youth" on Sunday evening's newscast on WSBT-TV and on the Opinion page Monday in The Tribune.

See **RALLY/B2**

Rally

The general public joined in, too, including the women's basketball team at Saint Mary's College. Someone last year gave a 1992 Honda Civic, which St. Vincent sold for \$700.

And in Salem, Ore., the St. Vincent de Paul School heard about Eric's Promise through a newsletter, says Eric's mom, Mary Molnar. Now the schoolkids are running the same kind of campaign for their St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Kochanowski offers these ideas for businesses: Set out a barrel to collect donations. Or set out a canister at cash registers to collect money.

At St. Matthew's School, a group of 70 or so kids known as the Young Vincentians are leading the drive. They're gathering "everything you collect in a garage sale," says third-grade teacher Pam Van Huffel.

The kids make and occasionally air commercials to beg for donations over the TVs in each

classroom, she says.

The parish is collecting stuff, too. The Young Vincentians in the fifth through the eighth grade will visit the St. Vincent de Paul thrift store next week. They may fold clothes or stock shelves.

"A lot of the kids in the club have never experienced the big store," Van Huffel says.

Our Lady of Hungary School wanted to partake, but it had just done a big project to help the tsunami victims in Asia. So, the school gave \$60, says Principal Clem Wroblewski.

Here are the other schools where kids are participating. They are focusing on clothing and food drives:

Holy Cross School, Holy Family School, St. Adalbert's School, Queen of Peace School, St. Bavo's School, St. Joseph's School (in Mishawaka and South Bend), St. Monica's School, Marian High School and St. Joseph's High School.

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