

# GOOD NEIGHBORS

## Rivers School Philanthropy Program Creates Life-long Givers

Nonprofit schools and colleges in Massachusetts make significant and often very creative contributions that benefit the social life and economic health of their communities. Students volunteer with community service agencies, school and city officials work together on projects, and schools and colleges offer the use of their facilities to local groups.

At The Rivers School in Weston, students don't just raise money for charities, they're learning the fundamentals of charitable giving.

Working in partnership with the Natick-based Crossroads Community Foundation, members of the Rivers Givers student group carefully evaluate community service agencies as possible recipients of the money they raise. They also encourage students to start service projects and monitor the charities they select to see if their money is being well spent.

The students evaluate dozens of proposals, make site visits and discuss which programs are the most effective, which serve the most needy clients and how far to spread their giving. Once they make a decision, they submit their recommendations to the Crossroads distribution committee.

Crossroads trained the students in the grant-making process and is matching the money the students raise, three dollars for every dollar raised.

This year, Rivers Givers presented two checks for \$5,000 each to the GoodStart program, which fosters child safety and good parenting, and to the Mazie Foundation, which runs mentoring programs for disadvantaged high school students in Framingham.

With the 2005 gifts, Rivers Givers will have donated \$30,000 to causes that help youngsters in the western suburbs of Boston. Last year, they gave grants to an arts therapy program for children who have experienced the death of a parent or sibling and to a program for children with disabilities.

Rivers Givers was established in 2002 and raises money at the Rivers Holiday Basketball Tournament held each December. After the tournament, the students begin studying proposals from community service agencies.



“When I first began working with the Rivers Givers, I thought that giving money away would be easy,” said Rivers senior Kelsey Clark, one of the 13 members of this year’s group. “As I moved on in the process, though, it became a bit more complicated.”

Clark said the process “has shown me just how much need exists right now in front of my nose.”

“This program brings giving to a new level,” Rivers Community Service Director Jeannette Szretter explained. “It really creates life-long givers.”

### Food drive breaks record

At Rivers, which includes grades 6 through 12, students also serve their community in other ways.

◆ Last fall’s annual holiday food drive raised a record-breaking 2,500 items – enough to feed more than 50 local families. The donations were distributed by A Place to Turn food bank in Natick, the Hudson Food Pantry and the Weston Food Pantry in time for Thanksgiving.

◆ This spring, two Rivers seniors transformed the backyard of a school property into a community vegetable garden and are donating the produce to A Place to Turn. Middle School science classes will use the garden as part of their curriculum in the fall.

◆ The Rivers School Children’s Theater performed an original play for area preschoolers who might not otherwise have

the chance to see a live theater production. The shows are presented at no charge to the audiences.

◆ For their back-to-school orientation last August, members of the Junior class spent a day working at the Greater Boston Food Bank. On a hot, sticky day in late August, they sorted enough food to feed hundreds of hungry families in the Boston Area. The project not only helps needy people, it also brings the students closer together and helps develop class unity early in the year.

◆ Each student in grades 9 through 11 is required to complete at least 30 hours of service in the nonprofit sector before the end of his or her junior year. At least 20 hours must be completed off campus.

◆ Students in the Upper School are eligible to participate in the Afternoon Community Outreach Program in partnership with various educational and nonprofit organizations in the area.

The MANS&C Newsletter is starting a new feature that focuses on the far-reaching and often mutually beneficial impact our member institutions have on their local communities. To include the activities of your school or college, please send them to MANS&C’s communications specialist, Ann Hall, at [annhall68@comcast.net](mailto:annhall68@comcast.net).