

WHEELER STUDENTS WALK THE WALK

Community service group asks for small donations to make big changes

By Elizabeth Yerkes
Times Staff Writer

Waterford – Wheeler High School students kept walking around in circles, but their effort will all go straight to a good

cause.

Twenty-three of the school's Students In Action members and supporters looped the interior of the Crystal Mall for three hours last Saturday to collect pledges and save the world, \$10 at a time. The walk-a-thon was one of several fund-raisers the school community service group organized throughout the year.

"It's fitting that we're doing this on March fourth," Wheeler biology teacher Andreas Connal-Nicolau said as he "marched forth" with a cadre of students who wore \$10 Club bumper stickers on their T-shirts as a uniform.

The \$10 Club pools small donations from across the United States to fund poverty alleviation

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Left, Wheeler High School's Students In Action members Lara Briscoe, Sam D'Angelo and Amanda Anderson, left to right, walk together in an effort to raise awareness of, and funds for, The \$10 Club at the Crystal Mall last weekend. Right, Wheeler sophomore Mackenzie Robert wears a bumper sticker that reads "Help Save the World" during the walk-a-thon. **Photos by Cheryl Albaine**

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projects around the globe. Founded in 2002 by Adam Roberts, a friend of Connal-Nicolauo, the club funds one project a month anywhere in the world.

By some standards, the projects, which average less than \$2,000, are small.

"But they have real impact," Roberts said from his Washington, D.C., home office.

By day, Roberts works for the Born Free Foundation, an international wildlife charity that works to protect threatened species in the wild. He founded The \$10 Club after attending the World Summit on Sustainable Development, where he realized how simple and inexpensive solutions could help humans suffering around the world.

Last month, the club spent \$2,630 to buy and deliver 400 family-sized bed nets that would protect the entire village of

Herowana, Papua New Guinea, against mosquito-borne diseases. The money also covered basic medicines and anti-malarial tablets.

Other recent projects included spending \$2,250 to provide all 150 children at a Ukrainian orphanage with insulated winter boots.

"In my home country my family also tries to help others, one cause at a time," said Rafael Freire, an exchange student from Recife, Brazil, who added that he'd never been part of a walk-a-thon before.

Ben Buehler, a senior at Wheeler and Freire's host in this country, said he joined Students In Action this year "to help our community and the world community." Buehler said SIA has teamed up with another Wheeler charity group this year, the Wheeler AIDS Chikambuso Widows and Orphans Project, to raise funds to build a school in Africa.

Crystal Mall rules prohibit

direct solicitation, but when bystanders stop them, the Wheeler SIA students know just how to answer. Business studies teacher Linda Farinha briefly reviewed information before they took a step, but most knew it by heart anyway.

Senior Callie-Jean Tuthill and sophomores McKenzie Robert, Lara Briscoe and Katie Castagno kept a brisk pace with classmates Samantha D'Angelo, Amanda Anderson and Amanda Antonino, all of whom stay active in extra-curricular sports, clubs and service organizations.

"I'm just tagging along to support everyone," senior Jennifer Pianka said, although she's no stranger to successful fund rais-

ing as a member of the Girl Scouts and North Stonington Grange.

Dan Watrous, another senior, highlighted the projects that Wheeler's donations to The \$10 Club helped purchase last year: school uniforms for a Thai school and literacy program, surgical instruments for an eye clinic in Madagascar, and textbooks and clean drinking water for a village in Guatemala.

"It's exciting and fun to get together with friends to raise funds," Watrous said. "It's so easy to give \$10 a month - it's a small contribution but does so much."

For more information about The \$10 Club, visit www.thetendollar-club.org.

