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Coombs school students in race for pennies

Students from Coombs Intermediate School in Banning have collected enough pennies to make a 100-mile long chain around a racetrack in Fontana for the opportunity to get published in the Guinness Book of World Records.

As of Wednesday, they had raised \$964.69. Coombs site coordinator Melissa Lopez said students, staff, volunteers and supporters have been collecting pennies since Jan. 13 with the goal of collecting more than \$845 worth of pennies.

The reason for doing this is because Coombs, as part of the THINK Together program, will attempt to create a contiguous chain of pennies that will loop the racetrack at NASCAR's Auto Club Speedway in Fontana 50 times to create a 100-mile chain of pennies in an event called "Miles of Change."

"The premise behind the event is that every person, doing their small part, can create change," Lopez said.

Lopez said students have been the ones who have raised the most money but that donations have come in from the community and through the online donation site, which is located at www.firstgiving.org/think-coombs.

To date the students have raised \$659.25 offline and \$305.44 through the online site.

On March 25, Lopez and several students will head out to Fontana to lay the pennies on the racetrack in the hopes of beating out other schools for the chance to be published in the Guinness Book of World Records.

"I believe that in the Inland Empire we are leading all the other schools. That says a lot because in this area money means a lot," Lopez said.

In addition to creating the "Miles of Change," Coombs Intermediate School students will also be celebrating the bicentennial of President Abraham Lincoln's birth and with the 100 miles will honor the 100th anniversary of the introduction of the first Lincoln penny.

As an incentive, Lopez said the top four classrooms that raise the most money will receive a pizza party and the students who raised the most will get a V.I.P. party.

THINK Together, a nonprofit organization, is one of California's leading and largest providers of after-school programs serving 35,000 students at more than 200 schools and community centers throughout Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

THINK Together's mission is to provide high quality academically-oriented after school programs for K-12 students regardless of race, creed, or socioeconomic status.

"I am very proud of the students for collecting the money needed for the challenge," Lopez said.