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Southern California Students Set New World Record With 65 Mile Chain of Pennies

FONTANA, Calif., -- Close to 2,000 students and 200 chaperones worked nearly six and a half hours to lay down a 65 mile chain of pennies on the racetrack at Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, CA, setting a new Guinness World Record(TM: 63.29, -0.32, -0.5%) for the longest chain of pennies. Youth in Fort Scott, Kansas laid down a 40-mile chain of pennies in July 2008.

The Southern California students, representing schools across a four-county region, all attend THINK Together after-school programs.

In early February, more than 35,000 students in THINK Together's after-school programs throughout Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino County launched a penny drive, "Miles of Change," to commemorate the Bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth; and in recognition of the Lincoln Penny's Centennial, the students set out to collect at least 8.5 million pennies, or 100 miles of pennies.

The students outdid themselves because in all, they ended up collecting more than 15.8 million pennies or \$158,722.63 worth of change. That is nearly 188 miles of pennies.

All of the change collected, including nearly 5.5 million pennies used to accomplish the Guinness World Record(TM: 63.29, -0.32, -0.5%) feat, will go directly into funding activities for the free after-school program which targets at-risk and low-income students.

Validating the students' accomplishment were official judges: Dave Allen, vice president of Auto Club Speedway; and Marc Cipres, Security Manager, UPS. Serving as additional honorary judges for the event were; Matt Mullins, star of The CW's "Kamen Rider: Dragon Knight;" Gerson Mayen, Chivas USA soccer player; Leona Aronoff-Sadacca, THINK Together board member; and Michelle Babin, an alum of America's Next Top Model(TM: 63.29, -0.32, -0.5%) and a THINK Together program leader.

"President Obama and his wife Michelle remind us that people, each doing their individual part, have the collective power to create miles of change. And it's in that spirit that we designed the 'Miles of Change' community engagement project so our students could experience that first-hand," said Randy Barth, founder and CEO of THINK Together.

NASCAR Driver Kyle Busch supports THINK Together after-school programs and championed the organization's "Miles of Change" project.

Busch explains, "In a lot of our urban communities, the drop-out rate is nearing 50%.

"Sometimes kids just need a safe place to go after-school, a place where they can get help with their homework and continue to learn. In Southern California, THINK Together is doing just that."

Larry Tenney, THINK Together's chief public affairs officer and the director of the "Miles of Change" project said, "Among other things, we hoped this broad-scale, unprecedented community engagement project would bring much attention to THINK Together and our program throughout the region and it appears we've done just that.

"'Miles of Change' was successful because our students and their families, our staff, our fans and our community partners including Auto Club Speedway, Bank of America, AMR, Brinks, Burrtec Disposal, Chivas USA, Univision, UPS, Yakult and others came together with a common goal, each doing their individual part."

"Close to 40,000 people were involved in creating 'Miles of Change.' Their efforts have demonstrated to our students what's possible," added Tenney.

THINK Together, a non-profit, is the largest provider of academically-focused after-school programs in California serving more than 35,000 low-income and at-risk students at 200+ sites across a four-county footprint of Southern California (Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties).

THINK is an acronym that stands for Teaching, Helping, Inspiring & Nurturing Kids.

Anyone wishing additional information about or desiring to contribute to THINK Together and its "Miles of Change" project can visit one of the following websites:

www.THINKtogether.org

www.MilesOfChange.com

www.MilesOfChange.blogspot.com

www.YouTube.com/THINKtogether