



NEWS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Elementary School Student Lifts Spirits, Supports Peers with Gift Card Fundraising Drive

FONTANA, CA – Canyon Crest Elementary School fifth-grader Noah Walker wanted to do more to help families facing hardships brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Initiating a community fundraiser, Walker raised approximately \$650 and used it to purchase a variety of gift cards – including McDonalds, Target, and other food-related cards – for families in need.

The gift cards will be distributed to selected families beginning March 29 and continue throughout the week.

“I had no idea Noah was doing this. He just came to school one day with a bag of gift cards,” Canyon Crest Principal Kelly Wilbert said. “It really touches my heart to see this from one of our students. At Canyon Crest we promote growth mindset, where students are encouraged to develop their talents and leadership skills. To see Noah emerge as a community leader during the pandemic shows that our students are being mindful.”

In January, Wilbert and Canyon Crest staff made food deliveries to families in need. Wilbert recognized that some families were struggling, and set out to provide additional support. She organized thematic meal distribution days, encouraging teachers to dress up and greet families personally, and used her own money to purchase a \$50 McDonalds gift card to give to one family at random.

Walker was excited to see the long line of cars at his school for a Valentine’s Day-themed distribution, with his teachers dressed in red, masked up and handing out meals. Walker was curious when he saw Wilbert distributing the gift card.

When Walker discovered the reason for the line was to help families struggling to put food on the table, he instinctively knew he had to help whatever way he could. After talking to his mother about the realities of food insecurity, Walker began his fundraising drive by asking his grandmother to contribute. Soon, Walker was receiving donations from friends, family and neighbors.

“I feel good doing this for those who need the help,” Walker said. “I can’t wait to get back to school. My favorite subject is math but the thing I like the most about school is seeing my friends.”

Walker and his mom were forced to relocate in the early stages of the pandemic, one of many families in the Fontana community that had their lives disrupted, either through illness, financial loss or the death of a loved one. Since then, the family’s situation has stabilized, with Walker emerging as a symbol of empathy and compassion.

“Noah was sad when he noticed there was only one gift card given away that day, and that prompted his call to action,” Wilbert said. “I can’t say enough about Noah and his family, for being so generous with their time, and serving as role models for the community.”

Gift cards will be distributed to families in need who have been identified by Canyon Crest teachers and staff. Some families will come to Canyon Crest to receive their card, while others will be delivered to homes by Wilbert and an instructional aide.

“It is wonderful to see the Fontana community come together and help each other through tough times,” Superintendent Randal S. Bassett said. “Noah Walker and Kelly Wilbert have shown great compassion and leadership, showing our community how a small act of kindness can have a lasting impact.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

FUSD_WALKER: Canyon Crest Elementary School fifth-grader Noah Walker has donated nearly \$650 in gift cards to families in need, which will be distributed beginning March 29.

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