

PALATINE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SHOW SUPPORT FOR CLASSMATE'S FAMILY AFTER TRAGIC LOSS



These blue donation jars with "Buckets for Brad" written on them were passed around school for four days. More than \$10,000 was collected for the Walls family.

When an unexpected tragic event struck a Palatine High School senior's family, several students and Palatine community members showed their support through fundraising efforts for the family.

Palatine High School senior Brad Wall's father unexpectedly passed away on Dec. 8, and his friends rallied with the PHS community to raise more than \$10,000 in four days to help the family pay for medical bills and funeral services. Those efforts did not include additional funds raised throughout the Palatine community.

"After Brad's dad passed away, we were in kind of shock. He's such a good friend of ours" said Palatine High School senior Brian Keough. "Ryan Gronwick (Palatine High School senior) mentioned we should do a fundraiser for Brad and his family."

The Walls family has encountered a series of hardships throughout the years, and now is faced with the unexpected death of their father Barry Keith "Brick" Walls. Keough and Gronwick, along with fellow Palatine students Alex Nawrot, Anthony Depersia, Cody Oversen, Ben Nzerem, Ian Holst, and Andrew Neilsen, were the students who got the efforts started.

"Once we got the ball rolling, next thing we knew we had blue donation buckets going around in school and the outpouring of donations was incredible," Keough said. "People were giving without hesitation, and we didn't know who many of the donations came from. People were handing over \$20 without thinking twice about it."

The community also became involved. Photo's Hotdogs, 301 N. Northwest Highway,

donated \$1100, which represented the amount of money they received from orders Dec. 12-14. Hot Dog Richies, 220 N. Northwest Highway, donated a portion of their sales from Dec. 15-16. Additionally, Pizza Bella, 100 W. Northwest Highway, is donating a percentage of their sales each night for an entire week. Community members can also make donations through Chase Bank to Dawn M. Walls, Brad's mother.

"A lot of Palatine High School kids come here for lunch, and Brad is one that comes pretty regularly," said Tony DeFilippis, owner of Pizza Bella. "One of Brad's friends told me the family didn't have enough money for services, and whatever my sales are at the end of the night, I am giving a portion to the family. I truly thought what the students did was amazing. These kids are well on their way to learning that giving is more important than receiving."

Other ways students organized fundraising efforts was at the boys' basketball game on Dec. 14. Abt Electronics donated a 43-inch television to be raffled at the game. More than \$2,000 was raised that evening in honor of the Walls family.

Just before the world mourned the school shooting in Newtown, Conn., a Schaumburg High School student Mikas Tibebu lost his life in a hit and run accident the prior weekend. Palatine High School social studies teachers, Mark Johnson, said the students' efforts are refreshing in light of both local and national tragedies. Brad, who Johnson said seemed overwhelmed by the community support, still made sure he gave back to the local community. He took a portion of money donated to his family, and contributed it to a fund in Tibebu's name.

"You couple all this with the events that happened in Connecticut last week, and we saw polar-opposite actions from humans, which was a nice balance to a really awful day," Johnson said. "The outpouring was amazing."