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## Students pitch in, collect food

Crooked Creek,  
Crestview  
youngsters do  
their part

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STEVE HEALEY / The Star

Crooked Creek Elementary students Samantha Flores (from left), Dominique Curry and Luke Geiser help with loading food at the Washington Township school. A food drive yielded a total of 2,505 cans of food, which was loaded Monday onto a Gleaners Food Bank truck.

*"We want to encourage youth in making winning life choices. They're the next generation of philanthropists."*

Jami Marsh, Pacers Foundation executive director

# SCHOOL SPIRIT OF GIVING



Bob Evans (left) gets help from Carmen Johnson packing canned goods into containers at Crooked Creek Elementary. Students donated more than 2,500 cans of food, which was loaded onto a Gleaners Food Bank truck Monday at the Washington Township School.

STEVE HEALEY / The Star

## Food drive tied to nationwide effort

**By Gretchen Becker**

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Crooked Creek Elementary students got some help from the Indiana Pacers and Indianapolis Fire Department in their efforts to help others in their community. Twenty-five students in Grades 4-5 who are peer mediators at the school loaded 2,505 canned goods on to a Gleaners Food Bank truck Monday. Pacers center David Harrison, mascot Bowser, Pacers staff and members of

IFD Station 12 (located across from the school) helped move the goods.

The goal of the school was to break last year's canned food drive total of 2,325 items, said Crooked Creek principal Mary Beth Reffett. The class with the most canned goods earned a popcorn and movie party. Second-graders took the title with 629 canned goods collected.

Wesley Stowers, 10, and Emma Purcell, 9, helped count cans and distributed collection bins to classrooms.

"We were all surprised when we realized second grade was winning," said Emma, who brought flour, beans and chicken noodle soup.

Wesley said the school does the food drive "to be giving." He helped pick out green beans, baked beans and corn at the grocery.

"We usually collect for people who

don't have enough food," he said.

The school is participating in a nationwide canned food drive through The LEAGUE, a service learning organization, said Eric Hollister, The LEAGUE state director for Indiana. The goal of this project is to set the first Guinness Book of World Records mark for the world's largest student-led food drive. There are more than 370 schools nationwide participating and more than 60 in Indiana.

"The whole idea is for the school to continue to do community service projects," Hollister said. "It takes community service and turns it into a team spirit and can turn into state-coded curriculum."

Crooked Creek was part of the pilot program last year, Hollister said. Locally The LEAGUE has partnered with the Pacers Foundation to form a program

called Be Charitable.

"We want to encourage youth in making winning life choices," said Jami Marsh, Pacers Foundation executive director. "They're the next generation of philanthropists."

After meeting Hollister in February, Marsh worked with him to form the partnership. They send the "Starting Five" to each event — Pacers players, Fever players, mascots, Pacemates and front office staff.

After loading all of the food, the Pacers representatives took pictures, signed autographs on a basketball for the school and gave high fives to kids who lined the hallways.

Any school can record fundraisers throughout the year at [www.league-worldwide.org](http://www.league-worldwide.org).

★ Call Star reporter Gretchen Becker at (317) 444-5574.