

## Japan effort sparks plenty of generosity



Withanie Lemke holds younger daughter Holly as Japan aid dynamo Madeleine shows off just some of the bottles collected in her campaign.

*Neil Horner photo*

By Neil Horner - Parksville Qualicum Beach News

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Sometimes, when you set out to do good, something extra special can happen.

That's something six-year-old Qualicum Beach resident Madeleine Lemke learned to her delight when she decided to collect bottles and cans to raise money for disaster relief in Japan.

Lemke, along with mom Withanie, had set a goal of \$200 when she began her bottle drive two weeks ago, but an article in *The News*, along with generosity from residents and businesses in the area, saw her raise much, much more than that.

"We earned \$1,030," Madeleine said.

That's not all, said her proud mom, noting her husband Trent had pledged his company, Ascent Helicopters, would match whatever his daughter raised, bringing the total to \$2,060 — over 10 times her original goal.

“When she found out how much she had raised, she said, ‘Yay, Japan will be rich!’”

Although she said the biggest help in her campaign was the article in the newspaper, that was by no means the only stroke of luck for the Lemkes.

“Based on the article, a lot of people called our house for pickup. The biggest contributor was RE/MAX First Realty. We went there on the first day and the secretary sent an e-mail around to other realtors and that Friday we went back and their lunch room was full. Absolutely full.”

Besides the one van and one truck of bottles and cans, the staff at RE/MAX gave \$120 in cash.

So much generosity posed one or two unexpected problems.

“Remember when the bottles were falling out of daddy’s truck?” Madeleine asked.

Her mom laughed.

“We drove behind and were the spotters,” Withany said. “A couple of plastic bags blew and we picked them up.”

The money will be donated to the Red Cross disaster relief fund for Japan.

Raising that much money was rewarding, but the Lemkes found there was far more to it than that.

While it was gratifying to be able to help the Japanese people in their plight, Lemke said her family got much more out of the experience than that.

“It started out as a project for her to do but my husband got involved and then his brother and my dad, grandpa and uncles,” she said. “It ended up being really meaningful for the whole family.”

The experience was so positive, Lemke said, she wants to find other families with young children who would like to get involved in service work.

“I would love to find other parents in the community who want to do service work with their kids and to do it together,” she said. “With five or six interested families who want their kids to be involved in service work, it multiplies so much more.”

Anyone who is interested in Lemke’s idea can contact her at 250-594-8488.