

PENNIES PER PATRIOT PROJECT

This program started from a simple comment from a student "So what's the big deal about 4,000 dead in Iraq - that's not a lot - you can't even buy a good car for that amount".

It occurred to me (like being hit by a brick), that many middle school students have a concept of just how many of anything represents a large number - particularly that of people who have given their life for America.

To drive home a point, I took a single penny - and declared that "this penny now represents the life of a single soldier killed in Iraq - who will not grow up to raise a family, be a good uncle/aunt to you, or become a productive citizen - and what a shame it is". This can also be applied to a fallen veteran of any U.S. war. My own namesake- Patrick Organ - was a 20-year old that was killed on the island of Iwo Jima.

The penny that I dropped in the bucket was named "Patrick Organ", and the rest is history.

Students at first brought in single pennies, or whatever they had in their pockets -and were actually reverent to the atmosphere of dropping the penny into a large jar. Students emptied piggy banks, cleaned off desks, and emptied pockets to contribute. Many have asked for a moment of silence, gave the jar the sign of the cross, or just pressed their fingers to the side.

This year, 34,430 pennies were collected. A donation of \$ 343.30 will be forwarded to the local chapter of Forgotten Soldiers Outreach.

This not just a request for pennies. It is a symbolic gesture / educational tool for each student to realize that our fallen veterans are not just numbers for the history books, but that they are real people.

*Created and Implemented by Mr. Patrick Organ, Civic Teacher at
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