

AHS students raise \$4K for LeBlanc family



Top and Bottom photo: Student Council president Jennifer Lang presented Deana LeBlanc with a \$4,000 check in a presentation at the Auburn High School Friday, Feb. 8. The money will go towards a fund to get a service dog for LeBlanc's son, Alex, who has a condition that triggers frequent seizures. During the event Alex enjoyed his time with the high school students, running around the room to deliver high-fives and even dancing with a few of the seniors.



Rich Hosford photos
Auburn High School Student Council members Jennifer Lang, Brittany Van Winkle, Kristy Callahan, Annie Sheerin and Holly Hodgkins pose with the LeBlanc family, from left, Alex, Deana, Jennifer and Jeffrey. The student council members are working on fundraising events to raise money for an assistance dog for Alex that will help keep him safe during his many seizures. During the school's Winter Carnival Friday, Feb. 8, the students presented a check for \$4,000 to the family.



Top and Bottom Photo: Auburn High School students were also given a chance to enjoy themselves at the 2008 Winter Carnival in the school's gymnasium Friday, Feb. 8. One of the most competitive events of the day was tug-of-war, which pitted one class against another in a competition of strength.



Auburn High School Student Council president Jennifer Lang poses with Town Clerk Ellen Gaboury during the Winter Carnival at the school's gymnasium Friday, Feb. 8. The student council had worked to raise money from students for the Auburn Community Assistance Fund, a fund that helps residents in need handle the costs of heating oil.



During a presentation by the Auburn High School to present a check from fund-raising activities run to help buy a service dog for Alex LeBlanc, his sister, Jennifer was also given a gift to acknowledge her role as a supportive elder sibling.

BY RICHARD HOSFORD
NEWS STAFF WRITER

AUBURN — There was more than just the normal games and inter-grade competition at this year's Winter Carnival at the Auburn High School. The students began the program with the announcement of two donations for local causes that demonstrated once again that students in Auburn are willing to dedicate their time, and their money, to improving the community.

Student council president Jennifer Lang presented two checks at the event Friday, Feb. 8, one for the amount of \$114 to the Auburn Community Assistance Fund and another of \$4,000 for Alex LeBlanc, a local preschool student whose family is in the process of fundraising to pay for a seizure help dog from the non-profit organization 4 Paws for Ability.

Alex, 5, has Myoclonic Astatic Epilepsy, a condition that triggers frequent seizures that cause him to faint on the spot, making any

"If Alex were to begin to shake all over, the dog would throw its body up against him so he won't hurt his head or body parts while he is shaking," she said. "It would try to break his fall."

To raise money for Alex, the students organized a "Hats For Alex" week earlier this month where students paid \$5 to get a blue wristband that allowed them to wear hats in the school building during class time. Because this is something that is normally forbidden, the students came out in droves to support Alex and take advantage of a chance to break the dress code.

Student council member Leah Norris said in an interview earlier this month that the student council came up with idea of "Hats for Alex" week after trying to think of events that would generate interest among their classmates.

"We brainstormed some ideas, and we thought a hat day was something many kids

been so overwhelmed with the response and your help to get the service dog. You took time from your schedules to raise money for my son, and I appreciate it."

The LeBlanc family has to raise a total of \$11,000 to pay for the cost of the dog and its training.

The total sum of the money for Alex was increased at the Winter Carnival when the students did some exciting, fast-paced and spontaneous fund-raising during the rally. The grades competed against each other in a "coin war," with buckets being passed around the bleachers by the class presidents who had to raise as much money in loose change and small bills as possible in a minute.

Lang said the students decided to help Alex, who they had not met until the carnival, after speaking with Mrs. LeBlanc.

"We wanted to help one of our own," she said. "We've been doing the Invisible Children campaign, and we decided we wanted to help someone who lived in Auburn. To see that we can be really nice."

The students will also hold a benefit spaghetti supper for Alex Thursday, Feb. 28, from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Auburn High School cafeteria. The cost of the dinner is \$10 for adults, \$7 for students and free for children under five. The event will include a raffle and silent auction.

Town Clerk Ellen Gaboury, who was at the carnival on behalf of the Auburn Community Assistance Fund, said the money the students raised would help keep local families with

financial needs warm this winter.

The fund, she explained, was started in the 1980s by George Jewell, a member of the Board of Selectmen at the time. The goal of the fund is to provide a one-time per year assistance grant to families who cannot afford home heating oil. The money for the program comes from a golf fund-raising event at the Pakachoag Golf Course, and from solicited donation from town residents and businesses.

Gaboury said that with the increase in oil prices this year, many people are looking for some assistance, and that every little bit people can donate helps keep their fellow residents warm.

The gift from the students was a welcome surprise, Gaboury said.

"I think it's wonderful they chose to donate this money and keep it within the community and help their fellow residents of Auburn," she said. "There are a lot of good causes and charities out there, it's wonderful that they kept it local."

To help raise money for Alex's assistance dog, visit www.4paws4alex.org. Tickets for the spaghetti dinner can be bought in high school's main office or by calling (508) 832-7711. To donate to the Auburn Community Assistance Fund, contact Gaboury at the Town Clerk's office at (508) 832-7701.

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