



## Valley Catholic students raise money for cardiovascular research while focusing on being kind and active

Valley Catholic is top fundraiser for the Kids Heart Challenge in Oregon & SW Washington

PORTLAND, March 15 — The American Heart Association, the world’s leading nonprofit organization focused on heart and brain health for all, is honoring students at Valley Catholic Elementary School for raising more than \$36,000 as part of the American Heart Association’s Kids Heart Challenge.

The [Kids Heart Challenge™](#) is an [in-school curriculum](#) aimed at improving physical and emotional well-being while also raising funds for the mission of the American Heart Association. Supplemental resources and school support focus on the whole child – including social, emotional, and physical well-being. While core activities focus on heart and brain health, this year, a special emphasis was put on two challenges centered around being kind and being active.

“The Kids Heart Challenge teaches kids the importance of health, community service, and helping others – empowering young people to do great things,” said Melissa Doxtator, Valley Catholic Elementary School Principal. “These values echo Valley Catholic’s engaging, supportive, and faith-based education experience. We are so impressed by what these kids have accomplished.”

219 Valley Catholic students participated in interactive activities at school and from home to learn about heart, brain, lung and social and emotional health. Of the 219 participants, 123 students focused on the challenge of being kind and completing an act of kindness each day, while 96 students challenged themselves with being active for 60 minutes each day. In addition, 25 students completed a special challenge - Finn’s Mission - which honors American Heart Association volunteer and heart survivor, Finn Blumenthal, and includes lifesaving skills such as learning Hands-Only CPR and being able to recognize the signs of stroke. Valley Catholic has participated in the American Heart Association’s Kids Heart Challenge for 6 years. The program is led by Melissa Doxtator (Principal), Sarah Davis (Vice Principal), Melissa Efstathiou (Physical Education Teacher) and Eric Holstrom (Physical Education Teacher).

“Students need resources to support their physical and mental health,” said Eric Holstrom, Valley Catholic Physical Education Teacher. “The Kids Heart Challenge creates a fun sense of community and these kids met the challenge. In fact, because more than 100 students signed up for the Kids Heart Challenge, I had to shave my beard!”

Valley Catholic students raised \$36,269, the highest of any participating school in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

Studies have shown physical activity can improve mental health and lessen children’s anxiety and depression – two issues that have been of increasing concern to parents and educators during the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools are a critical link in providing this foundation through physical education.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' [Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](#)<sup>[1]</sup> only 20% of kids get the recommended amount of physical activity. In addition to improved physical health, the benefits of physical activity for children include better grades, school attendance and classroom behavior.

Funds raised by Kids Heart Challenge participants support the American Heart Association's scientific research and outreach programs, paving the way for technological breakthroughs to improve health outcomes while [creating healthier communities](#).

Additional Resources:

- [www.heart.org/khc](http://www.heart.org/khc)



In photo (left to right): Melissa Doxtator – Principal, Eric Holstrom – Physical Education Teacher, Fiona Robinson – 2<sup>nd</sup> grader, student survivor + top fundraiser, Melissa Efstathiou – Physical Education Teacher, Sarah Davis – Vice Principal

###

#### About the American Heart Association

The American Heart Association is a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. We are dedicated to ensuring equitable health in all communities. Through collaboration with numerous organizations, and powered by millions of volunteers, we fund innovative research, advocate for the public's health and share lifesaving resources. The Dallas-based organization has been a leading source of health information for nearly a century. Connect with us on [heart.org](http://heart.org), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or by calling 1-800-AHA-USA1.

For Media Inquiries:

Heather Wadia, [heather.wadia@heart.org](mailto:heather.wadia@heart.org), 415-350-6856

For Public Inquiries: 1-800-AHA-USA1 (242-8721)

[heart.org](http://heart.org) and [stroke.org](http://stroke.org)

---

<sup>[1]</sup> Department of Health and Human Services, 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines, page 14. Available for download here: <https://health.gov/paguidelines/default.aspx>