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(Neb.)-Jump Rope For Heart Raises Over \$12,000 In Chadron

By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 11/19/2012 08:17 AM

(Chadron)-The Nelson Physical Activity Center at Chadron State College was a hopping place Wednesday, Oct. 24. That's when more than 230 Chadron elementary and middle school students converged on the facility to take part in Jump Rope for Heart, the annual event that raises funds for the American Heart Association.

Chadron physical education teacher Linda Rischling, who spearheads the activity for the public schools, said the effort raised more than \$12,000 for the American Heart Association. In addition to the funds to combat and raise awareness of heart disease, proceeds from T-shirt sales were collected to support the Chadron Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department.

Rischling and Dr. Donna Ritzen, CSC assistant professor, say the events' success is the result of a team effort. Members of the CSC wrestling team joined students of Ritzen's courses in elementary rhythmic and individual dual sports to lead 11 stations of varying physical activities. Children stayed captivated and active as the college students led them through the stations. The partnership has become tradition and helped make the Chadron event an annual success.

"The partnership with CSC allows me to really promote the event and try to come up with new ideas as the event continues to grow," Rischling said. "This year we really wanted to stress the importance of recognizing warning signs of heart attack and stroke so individuals may receive medical attention before too late."

Ritzen said the event gives the college students, many of whom will become teachers, an opportunity to lead elementary students in a valuable setting. She said those manning the stations worked hard and did a great job.

The idea to support local fire and rescue personnel was largely prompted by their work responding to catastrophic wildfires fueled by the bone-dry drought-stricken landscape this summer, Rischling said. While the firefighters' laudable work during the wildfires may be obvious, Rischling said she can testify to the quality of Chadron's emergency personnel compared to at least one other location.

"We came upon an accident in New Mexico while traveling last year and could not believe the time it took for the first-responders to arrive at the scene," she said. "Such a slow response never would have happened in Chadron."

Rischling said Chadron's community spirit also is evident in its involvement of Jump Rope for Heart.

"I am amazed and grateful for the community and family support of this event," Rischling said. "Even in hard economic times, the community is willing to step forward and donate."

The official tally was \$12,427. A total of 236 children participated in the event, 144 of whom raised money.

Chadron's Jump Rope for Heart event has gained a reputation for being among the best in the state. Last year's event, which raised money to aid tornado victims in Joplin, Mo., raised \$16,640 – the most of any Jump Rope for Heart event in the state. Chadron was among 479 schools that raised \$918,000 in the effort, Rischling said. The previous year, the Chadron event was tops among schools in central and western Nebraska.

(Story and Photo courtesy of Justin Haag, CSC Information Services)