

Fifth grader holds fundraiser

by Ray Gabel, Midwest Transplant Network

Matt Barker, a fifth grader at Holden Elementary in Holden, Mo., wanted to do something special for National Donate Life Month, April 2012. So he and his friend, Karissa Meads, decided to hold a fundraiser to increase organ and tissue awareness and honor his brother Tyler, who received a lifesaving liver transplant when he was only 21 months old. Now in kindergarten and doing well, Tyler is very proud of all the work his big brother did to increase donation awareness.

“I hope we inspired other kids that you can help with any cause you believe in,” said Matt.

Matt first went to his principal and proposed the idea. Upon approval, a letter was sent to the elementary teachers and parents of the students. All week the students dressed up for different themes for spirit week, including Go Green, Be a Celebrity, Duck Dynasty and Crazy Hair day. Students were also able to donate money and were eligible to win prizes during spirit week. Matt and Karissa counted the money and made announcements over the loud speaker before classes began each day.

“We didn’t need math class that week after counting all the change,” said Matt. “The most exciting part was the anonymous letter and \$100 donation we received.” Matt and Karissa presented the final donation of more than \$500 to MTN Community Education Coordinator, Ray Gabel, in front of their class. “I hope we inspired other kids that you can help with any cause you believe in,” said Matt. “Matt and Karissa are young people who used their skills learned in school to help continue organ and tissue donation education efforts,” said Ray Gabel.



Front row: Tyler Barker
Back row: Karissa Meads, Matt Barker