

Lower School Students Respond to Last Wish

It was not enough for three fifth grade University School students to personally respond to a nine-year-old boy's last wish. In true USchool-fashion, they were determined instead to mobilize the entire Lower School to help Dalton Dingus set a Guinness Book of World record for the highest number of Christmas cards received. Samantha Boisvert, Melissa Caster and Navya Kulhari solicited the aid of guidance counselor Dr. David Womack and together presented the girls' idea to Lower School Director Dr. Nadine Barnes. Moved by both the story of the Kentucky child who had been battling cystic fibrosis since he was 4 years old and the girls' initiative, Dr. Barnes granted the girls permission to enact their card-raising strategy.



[Campaign Video by Grade 5 Students](#)

At the time University School students began their efforts, Dalton had received 23,000 cards. The last recognized effort was in 1992 when a Canadian gentleman collected just over 205,000 cards in a single holiday season. Samantha, Melissa and Navya worked with Lower School media specialist Heather Warren to create an iMovie to kick off the campaign with an announcement on the Lower School's WUTV news show, and the campaign was also promoted on the school's official Facebook page. University School's annual letter writing campaign for American troops was already underway, but students and staff members quickly expanded their efforts to help Dalton. Hand-crafted and computer-generated Christmas

cards began to pile up alongside the stocking stuffers and letters collected for military service men and women and distributed by the American Red Cross.

"There is nothing better than helping a person in need, especially around the holiday season," Melissa said in the girls' video. "Let's make a holiday miracle come true," all three pled. When asked what they thought about doing this project, now that it was over, Navya said, "The most important thing to me was that we helped someone's last wish come true." Samantha added: "We get so many presents and stuff at the holidays that we don't realize that to some people just being healthy is the best holiday gift that they could get."

By the time University School closed for winter break, University School students had mailed off over 1,000 Christmas cards to Dalton.

Thanks to efforts by supporters from across the nation and as far away as Japan, Dalton collect an astounding 800,000 Christmas cards. According to Huffington Post, ABC news interviewed Dalton's mother Jessica Dingus, after attention spread regarding her son's wish. "He's excited for the first time in a long time," she said. "He's laughing more, he's beginning to become how he was two years ago."

Those efforts proved timely. After the holidays, Dalton passed away, just two months before his 10th birthday. Our hope is that the overwhelming response prompted by Dalton's last wish provided his family with many fond and lasting memories.