

# Riverview students aim to collect six million pennies

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2010

■ Ambitious middle school project is a tribute to victims of the Holocaust

BY ALOMA JARDINE  
TIMES & TRANSCRIPT STAFF

No one gives much thought to a penny.

We toss them in our car cupholders, in dishes on our dressers. Our national leaders have endless debates about whether they are worth the trouble and expense to make or whether we should get rid of them all together and round everything to the nearest nickel.

If we lose one, we don't worry too much about it.

This, imagines Karen Horsman, is a little like the attitude toward the Jewish people that existed in Nazi Germany which makes a tribute to the six million victims of the Holocaust that a group of students at Riverview Middle School are working on all the more fitting.

Horsman, a Grade 8 teacher at the school, did a novel study on the *The Silver Sword*, which is set in Warsaw during the Second World War, with her students last year.

She also showed them a documentary called *Paper Clips* about a group of students in Tennessee who collected six million paper clips, worn by Norwegians during the war to protest the Nazi occupation, to represent those who died during the Holocaust.

Touched by the dreadful history and inspired by the documentary, Horsman's students begged to try a similar project: they'd collect six million pennies to honour the Holocaust victims.

Horsman says it took some convincing for her to go ahead with the project.

"It was at the very end of the year and it is quite an undertaking, but the kids talked me into it," she says.

Since it was so late in the year, students worked at gathering pennies over the last few weeks of the term and through the summer, but the project, which they've dubbed *Power of a Penny*, was only officially launched Friday.

Because it is such an ambitious endeavour, Horsman says they've set a goal of collecting the pennies over the next three years.

There are ten students on the *Power of a Penny* committee, all of whom have committed to see the project through to completion, even though they'll have moved on to high school long before the six million pennies have been gathered.

"It's amazing the commitment they've shown," Horsman says, adding they're already hard at work coming up with ideas to bring in more pennies.

She says they hope to have boxes they can distribute to businesses and workplaces around the community but they also realize that to reach their goal they are going to have to reach out beyond Metro Moncton.

They've begun drafting letters to some of their favourite celebrities - Justin Bieber and Taylor Swift among them - to see if they will send them a penny for the cause and have plans to display any pennies that are donated by well-known personalities.

"We're ready to alert the world," Horsman says. "The ideas are just rolling out of them but the key thing is we're going to have to go bigger and beyond our community and right now we are struggling with how do we do that. But they're willing, they're finding and coming up with great things and I'm very proud of them."

Horsman says they had long discussions about what to do with the money when the project is complete. Six million pennies works out to \$60,000, a significant sum.

In the end, students decided to donate the funds to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum in Poland. The plan is to have a small group travel to Poland in the summer of 2013 to deliver the donation in person.

"The hope is to go and spend a week and have the students come back as ambassadors to share with and educate others," Horsman says.

The students have already collected 54,600 pennies, which sounds like a lot, but is really a drop in the bucket of their ultimate goal. They hope to see more coins start flowing in now that the project has officially begun.

Anyone wishing to participate in the project can drop their pennies off at Riverview Middle School, 45 Devere Rd.