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APRIL 26TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Poplar Bluff R-I has raised over \$1 million for St. Jude since the 1988/89 academic year when the school system first became involved in the Math-A-Thon fundraiser.

While several individual schools across the country have surpassed Poplar Bluff's \$45,000 contribution this year, R-I is the only participant that has contributed on a district-wide basis for 30 years consistently, according to a representative from the children's research hospital.

"We thank the Poplar Bluff School District for allowing the students to participate in the St. Jude Math-A-Thon each year, continuing to help advance the mission of the hospital of finding cures and saving children," stated Ann Culpepper of St. Jude's Enterprise Contact Center.

The district's participation started at O'Neal Elementary with retired principal Lorenzo Sandlin, who unfortunately knew firsthand of the comfort the medical facility provides when a child tragically is inflicted with the diabolical disease. From the 1994/95 school year to 1998/99, Eugene Field got involved, then Lake Road, Junior High, Oak Grove and lastly the Middle School.

While Math-A-Thon is a K-8 fundraiser, the entire district contributes in some capacity, including fun books, skate nights, dress-down days and much more. Sandlin's

coordinating successor, Oak Grove Principal Jenifer Richardson, noted that the community plays a large part too, donating portions of proceeds if not 100 percent during business nights.

“I knew it meant a lot to Lorenzo to see the program continue to succeed,” explained Richardson with regard to picking up where Sandlin left off in 2013. “Our district has a special tie to [St. Jude] because we have had children receive health care there. You never know when one of our own children will need that assistance.”

About 8,500 children with cancer and other life-threatening diseases are treated at the Memphis hospital each year and their families never receive a bill for care, travel, housing or food, according to a fact-sheet Culpepper supplied. The overall childhood cancer survival rate has increased from 20 to 80 percent because of treatments invented at St. Jude since the hospital opened its doors in 1962.

Sandlin and his wife Debbie were honored for adopting the cause in order to teach students the importance of charity during the special recognition portion of the school board meeting on Thursday, April 19, in the Administrative Building. “We’ll go for that next million right away,” Superintendent Dr. Scott Dill assured the couple.

Pictured: Visiting St. Jude on Friday, April 6, were chaperones/parents (from left) Jenifer Richardson, Melanie Schalk, Cheryl Berry, Staci Barker, Shiela Boyles, Hilary Taylor, Stephanie Halter, Angie Bowman and Lorenzo Sandlin; and top fundraising students (in alphabetical order) Truston Alexander, Madeline Allbritton, Owen Baucom, Makayla Cantu, Alexis Cochran, Audrey Davis, Daine Dugas, Natalya Johnson, Anna Lack, Tristan Lady, Sawyer Richardson, Natalea Rommel, Aiden Sandlin, Clayton Schalk, Laine Schalk, Audrey Smith, Bailey Smith, Sara Tolliver, Caleb Vinson and Bristol Weadon. Not present for the photo was student Charlie Raglin.

Photo and articles submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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