

we WARM your

ben erger '20, loni aragon '19 and jazlyn lopez '20 work with ripbeams charity to raise leukemia awareness photo by t. reichow

DESCRIBE YOUR DECA PROJECT?

Ben: "We partnered with a local charity, RipBeams, to collect handmade beanies that..."

Loni: "That would go to kids with leukemia."

Ben: "Right. So Melissa Rippy, the founder of the charity, has worked with Brighton DECA in the past and Mrs. White already knew her. So we set up a meeting with her about her charity."

Jazlyn: "And we found out how we could do a community service project with her."

Ben: "Well, we knew we wanted to do a community service project. We had five key factors that helped us narrow down to RipBeams. They were that it needed to be local and..."

Jazlyn: "Passionate, organized, kid-focused..."

Ben: "Definitely kid focused. And growing and inspiring."

Jazlyn: "We knew we wanted to help kids, so it seemed like a good charity to work with while raising awareness of kids with leukemia."

HOW DID YOU RAISE AWARENESS?

Ben: "We started with setting a contest between teachers about who could raise the most beanies from their classes they taught."

Loni: "We were looking online for ideas and we saw that schools did Penny Wars. Well, we wanted to think outside the box and Mrs. White helped us come with Pie in the Face."

Jazlyn: "So teachers set a number of how many beanies they could get donated for their class. If the class met the number, they could pie their teacher in the face at the Spring Assembly. If they lost, the teacher could pick a student."

Ben: "So we had a conversion chart that helping one kid equals either a donation of one hat, one skein of yarn, \$15 or one loom."

HOW MUCH DID YOU RAISE?

Ben: We got 613 hats, 320 skeins of yarns, \$500 and 50 looms. So in the end we sponsored 1,034 students.

Loni: "Should we share what else we did to get all of these donations?"

Ben: "Yeah. We taught classes both in our school and in our community. So we went to Hoff Elementary and Northeast Elementary where we taught 70 students to make beanies. We went to United Power and taught people there how to make beanies. We went to the Kiwanis Club and talked to them about it."

Jazlyn: "At school, we taught about 200 students in different classes how to make beanies. We even got to instruct our teachers at a Monday Professional Development."

Ben: "We were in 'The Brighton Blade' and another newspaper, so we reached about 2,300 people."

WHAT WAS MOST REWARDING?

Jazlyn: "We had a bigger impact than we thought we were going to have."

Ben: "We got to go to the children's hospital. We didn't get to necessarily give the beanies to the kids, but we got to drop them off. Melissa has been posting different letters that she has received from kids on the social media. I think it's really cool to see that it is going somewhere. We have left an impact."

Loni: "You can actually see the impact."

Ben: "Our project won the First Place Community Service Project at State. So we are going to Nationals."

Jazlyn: "We are thankful."

Loni: "Thankful."

Ben: "Yes. We got to work with so many people. We made a lot of new relationships and a lot of new memories. That is rewarding as well."

"I think a lot of kids think they can't give back, BUT THEY ACTUALLY CAN. We all have the power to have A LASTING IMPACT."

Ben Erger '20



LOTS OF BEANIES. Jazlyn Lopez '19, Ben Erger '20 and Loni Aragon '19 present over 600 beanies to Melissa Rippy at her insurance agency. "Melissa was very surprised and overwhelmed by our donation. We are so proud to have helped her," Lopez said. **LET ME SHOW YOU.** Ben Erger '20 teaches students at Northeast Elementary how to make a beanie with yarn and a loom. "The kids asked why they couldn't make a hat for themselves. We got to show them there were people who are less fortunate than them and that they were helping them," Erger said. **DONATING TO THE HOSPITAL.** Ben Erger '20 and Jazlyn Lopez '19 pose in front of the Children's Hospital of Colorado sign after dropping off over 600 beanies. "It's super heartwarming and fulfilling to know what we're doing makes an impact," Lopez said. photos courtesy of b. erger