

Kids meet Ronald McDonald in Rancho Cucamonga

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Preschoolers at Perdew Elementary in Rancho Cucamonga play with their pumpkins on Thursday during the annual fundraiser for the Ronald McDonald House. (Frank Perez Correspondent)

RANCHO CUCAMONGA - The pre-schoolers and kindergarteners of Perdew Elementary School gathered their spare change on Thursday and collected more than \$300 for the Loma Linda Ronald McDonald House.

In exchange, they got to pick a pumpkin from the school garden and high five the red haired fellow himself.

At the annual fundraiser, Ronald McDonald told jokes, played games and took pictures with the curious students.

"Let's pretend our pumpkins can talk and make them say hello to each other," suggested the fast food mascot.

"Hello, hello, hello," yelled back Sharon Coffield's pre-school class.

"Wait, my pumpkin speaks Spanish," Ronald McDonald said. "Hola!"

"My pumpkin is from China," said Noah Nguyen, 4. "Ni hao!"

Ronald McDonald proceeded to teach the children greetings in French and Italian.

The Miller Avenue school held its first Ronald McDonald House fundraiser four years ago and has been doing it every year since.

This year, the Albertsons supermarket on Kenyon Way donated 250 small pumpkins for the occasion.

Assistant Principal Gene Yarrobino said it's a fun event for the school's youngest students, who don't get to enjoy field trips because their school days are so short.

"We want to teach them while their young the importance of giving to those in need," Yarrobino said.

Money raised on Thursday will go toward the Loma Linda facility, which houses families who want to

be close to their hospitalized children. The Loma Linda house serves at least 24 families every night and are at capacity almost every night, said Danielle Walters, events manager for the Loma Linda Ronald McDonald House.

The charitable organization is in the beginning stages of planning to expand the Loma Linda facility.