

Education

Fifth-graders hang loose

Hawaiian song, dance show spreads the aloha spirit and raises funds.

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Peace builders at Roosevelt Elementary School hit the tropics last week.

The whole fifth-grade class performed its annual Hawaiian show for families Thursday and Friday night, with funds from ticket sales going to help schoolchildren in Kenya.

"I think we helped ourselves and helped people learn how to be nice to other people," said fifth-grader Austin Jew. "You just have to try, pay it forward and see."

The performance ended with the students singing the school's "**Peace Builders'** Pledge," which is said before the start of school every morning, and was at the core of the students' performance.



The fifth grade class at Roosevelt Elementary School perform "Paying Kindness Forward with the Aloha Spirit" as part of the Hula Club's celebration of the Hawaiian culture on Wednesday. (Scott Smeltzer/Glendale News Press)

"The whole message of the aloha spirit is unity and tolerance for different people and different religions," Tiffany Kaloustian said. "It's not just for Hawaiian people, it's for everyone because we're all one family."

About 95 students performed Hawaiian dance, sang ancient songs and even pulled a few members of the audience onstage for lessons in hula dancing and Hawaiian language.

Each song and dance was intended to symbolize the beauty that many students, families or individuals can take for granted.

"We are the children of Hawaii; different views from every land," the students sang.

After their final dress rehearsal Wednesday, performer Margaret Renton detailed the work ethic in the five months leading up to the show.

"Our homework was to memorize lines and the chain of love — do a kind deed for someone else," she said.

Kyle Lucero took his neighbor's trash out.

"She's like 92," he said.

Other students spent time with neighbors or walked their grandparents' dogs.

The stage was flanked with two tall tikis and an 8-foot-tall papier-mache-esque volcano towered over the ensemble fifth-graders in island shirts, grass skirts and Hawaiian leis.

Students said they had practiced five to 10 minutes each day during lunch. And Kaloustian volunteered her lunch hour to coach.

"What's fun is getting the dances together," Kyle said. "Every day there was a different song."

The play is put on through the Hawaiian club, which comprises the entire fifth-grade class. In its first year about eight years ago, there were 20 students.

"The play brought us together," Austin said.

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