

Lucky 7s for Heartland Lutheran



Heartland Lutheran students -- (from left) Dylan Paustian, Abbi Winsterman, Josh Carstens and Zach Mettenbrink -- wait in line for lunch near a chart measuring progress toward the school's \$500,000 fundraiser.

Basketball marathon provides big bounce for fundraiser

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Last summer's world-record marathon basketball game by Heartland Lutheran High School students and alumni has hit its fundraising goal to the penny.

Heartland Lutheran Development Director Lloyd Wagnitz said the game, which has been recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records, has raised \$77,777.77.

Wagnitz said progress toward the goal was helped by a \$500 contribution. He was at a Christmas dinner when a Heartland Lutheran supporter asked him how much additional money was needed to hit the goal.

Wagnitz said he replied that a little less than \$200 was needed. The supporter wrote out a check so the goal was hit to the last penny. Wagnitz said that check was written Dec. 28.

Fundraising for the basketball game closed as of Dec. 31, Wagnitz said. All proceeds from the game went toward the 500 Plan.

The 500 Plan calls for 500 people to each donate \$1,000 to reach a goal of \$500,000. As a practical matter, donations of all sizes are being accepted.

"If someone wants to donate \$50, we'll take it," Wagnitz said.

With the proceeds from the basketball game included, the 500 Plan now stands at \$255,000, he said.

One of the goals for the 500 Plan was to raise enough money to allow Heartland Lutheran to hire a development director for its foundation. That goal was accomplished with the hiring of Wagnitz.

A major goal also was to help retire debt on the newest part of the school, which includes the gymnasium, some classrooms, the central office and commons area.

Debt payments are due each January and July.

Until the 500 Plan was started, Heartland Lutheran was only about one debt payment ahead of schedule.

Wagnitz said the school is now doing a little better than having to worry about the next payment only six months away.

“We’re working on January 2010,” he said.

Heartland Lutheran is now on a lot more solid financial footing than it was early in 2008. Then, a few people were questioning the long-term viability of the school. Wagnitz said those concerns should be eased.

“We’re here to stay,” he said. “We’re looking forward to 2009.”

While hitting the goal of \$77,777.77 for the basketball game became a big part of advancing the 500 Plan during the second half of 2008, there is no specific fundraising effort going on right now, Wagnitz said.

However, that will change.

Wagnitz said one idea he is considering is some kind of campaign to tie in with Heartland Lutheran’s 10th anniversary, which will be the 2009-10 school year.

While no specific fundraising campaign is going on now, Heartland Lutheran is still accepting any donations that people may want to make for the 500 Plan, Wagnitz said.

School officials do not want to slip back into the situation where they have to be concerned about making the next debt payment six months down the road, he said.

In addition to fundraising, Wagnitz said, Heartland Lutheran officials are anticipating a large freshman class for 2009-10, which should boost tuition revenue.