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### **Highlands Elementary Students Create Pinwheels to Help Displaced Syrian Children**

**Pittsburg, CA...**On Friday, March 18, students at Highlands Elementary School will show off more than 500 pinwheels and create a care package with a lasting impact. Student Council representatives at the school joined forces with an organization called Students Rebuild to take on a cause called the Students Rebuild Healing Classrooms Challenge, which will help Syrian children in Lebanon and Iraq recover from crisis. Student council members went to every classroom at Highlands Elementary School to show their peers how to produce a pinwheel. Each pinwheel crafted is meant to symbolize wishes of joy, freedom, and hope. Every pinwheel created also turns into a \$2.00 donation, to help student refugees from Syria. The Jeff Bezos Family Foundation has pledged \$2.00 per pinwheel, up to \$400,000, and has urged classrooms across America to take part in the project. Studentsrebuild.org will use funds raised to create a Healing Classroom, which trains teachers to work with student refugees, giving them tools to help refugees overcome the trauma they have endured.

The pinwheel project started off by being creative, but soon evolved into a learning opportunity for children to explore services to students thousands of miles away, study world events, have context for geography lessons, and discover how to work with schools all over the world - making a difference in the lives of Syrian refugees their own

age. “The impact this project had on Highlands students is huge as it helps teach our scholars about empathy and opens their eyes to see what refugees are facing,” said Julie Blackburn, Principal at Highlands Elementary. “I commend my staff and students for taking on this project. My hope is that projects like this help our community to have a new perspective on refugees. It makes the crisis in Syria more relevant in our own backyard and helps create compassion.”

Highlands Elementary school will celebrate the pinwheel project by hosting a special event on Friday March 18 from 8:30am – 10:00am. Each student will place their pinwheel at the front of the school. A banner will explain to the community why the pinwheels were made and help educate the public about Syrian refugees. According to the International Rescue Committee, pinwheels are currently being created across America and a large selection of them will be sent to Syrian children as a symbol of compassion and peace.

For additional information about this project go to: <http://studentsrebuild.org/find-challenge/syria-challenge>

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### **About Pittsburg Unified School District**

Pittsburg Unified School District (PUSD) is a K-12 district serving the community of Pittsburg, California. Founded in 1933, the school system is committed to providing an excellent opportunity for all students to learn. Comprised of eight elementary schools, three junior high schools, one comprehensive high school, one alternative education high school, an adult school, independent study, alternative learning experiences, and early childhood education services, the school district serves more than 10,500 students. PUSD is located in the San Francisco Bay Area, fifty minutes outside of downtown San Francisco.

### **About the Pinwheel Partners**

#### **Students Rebuild**

Students Rebuild is a collaborative program of the Bezos Family Foundation. Created in January 2010 in response to the devastating Haiti earthquake, Students Rebuild has mobilized thousands of young people in nearly 80 countries and all 50 United States and raised more than \$2.5 million in matching funds for rebuilding schools in Haiti, aiding disaster recovery efforts in Asia and supporting livelihoods in Africa. Through our Challenges, we tackle some of the world's most difficult problems, issues that one cannot affect alone. We believe every young person should have an opportunity to help others—but not everyone has the ability to fundraise. Our Challenges require young people to create a simple, symbolic object which the foundation matches with funding. This approach allows students of all ages, backgrounds and in countries around the world to

take action and see change on international concerns. <http://studentsrebuildorg/syria>  
#SRSyria

**Bezos Family Foundation:**

The Bezos Family Foundation is a private, independent foundation established by Jackie and Mike Bezos, who along with their children and spouses, serve as directors. Our vision is that all young people are prepared to achieve their full potential and make a meaningful contribution to society. The Bezos Family Foundation supports rigorous, inspired learning environments for young people, from birth through high school, to put their education into action. Through investments in research, public awareness and programs, the foundation works to elevate the field of education and improve life outcomes for all children.

<http://bezosfamilyfoundation.org>

**International Rescue Committee:**

The International Rescue Committee helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover, and gain control of their future. IRC teams provide health care, infrastructure, learning and economic support to people in 40 countries, with special programs designed for women and children. Every year, the IRC resettles thousands of refugees in 22 U.S. cities. <http://rescue.org>

**Global Nomads Group:**

Global Nomads Group (GNG) is a 501 c (3) non-profit organization with offices in New York City and the Amman, Jordan. We connect youth from around the world, with a focus on the people and places that have the greatest gaps in mutual understanding. Our virtual exchange programs allow participants discuss today's most challenging issues, break down common misconceptions, and become global citizens. Since its founding in 1998, GNG has offered programs in 54 countries, on all seven continents, and reached more than one million young people. <http://gng.org>