

# The Norman Transcript

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## OU International Programs Center reaches out to children

► Schoolchildren in Norman, Noble also collect change for UNICEF

By Julianna Parker  
Transcript Staff Writer

Brightly colored flags calling for peace around the world will be displayed on the South Oval at the University of Oklahoma beginning today.

The flags will be flown at the same time students are collecting donations for The United Nations Children's Fund, or UNICEF, to bring humanitarian assistance to children around the world.

Students at elementary, high school and university levels will collect money for UNICEF through the Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF program until Nov. 15.

The project was brought to OU by the new Vice Provost and Executive Director for International Programs Center Zach Messitte.

The program began in 1950, and Messitte said he has fond memories of collecting change for UNICEF as a child.

UNICEF provides small orange cardboard boxes that

young people can use to collect donations. Children are encouraged to take the boxes with them as they trick-or-treat and ask for spare change as well as candy on Halloween.

The fundraiser is particularly appropriate for IPC because stu-



Transcript Photo by Jerry Latzura  
Brittany Ryan, left, and her "OU Cousins" from France Alexandre Tournier and Carole Rodier write peace messages on flags that will be displayed on the South Oval.

dents at OU often want to help with international needs, but aren't sure how, Messitte said.

"There's a lot you can do to raise awareness," he said. "... But it's harder to create programs where students feel they can give something back."

One of the most attractive things about this program is that young people can give to a program that helps other kids around the world, Messitte said.

By collecting change for UNICEF, students can make quite an impact, he said.

IPC's goal is to raise at least \$3,000 for UNICEF this Halloween season. That amount represents the highest tier of giving for a university. If OU makes it, it will join Cornell and George Washington University as an "Emissary School," Messitte said.

The peace flags this week will

be displayed near a booth where students will be asked to donate to UNICEF. Students will be able to write their wishes for world peace at the booth. The flags were the vision of Rizalina Goldston, International Student and Programs Advisor.

She heard about the idea "Flags for Peace," similar to Tibetan prayer flags, from her professional organization, NAFSA: Association of International Educators. When the UNICEF fundraiser came up, she said she thought it was the perfect opportunity to do it.

"Not only will it attract students, faculty and staff to come to the UNICEF table and donate their spare change to UNICEF, it also brings the OU community together by displaying their thoughts, hopes and wishes for World Peace through our own Peace Flags," Goldston said.

Noble High School students also are collecting money for UNICEF this week.

Teachers Brent Peck and Gena Stejskal have organized the fundraiser in Noble with students from the high school's Honor Society, Gifted and Talented program and Business Professionals Association.

The students collected change for UNICEF at the home football game last weekend.

"I think we raised \$125 at the football game and we're looking for a goal of \$300," said Peck, Honor Society sponsor.

The high school students were looking for ways to give back to others when OU called and asked if they would be interested in helping with this fundraiser, Peck said.

The fundraiser fit in with the types of community service Peck said he wants his students involved with.

"We want our students to have a bigger view of the world," Peck said.

Today, they will trick-or-treat for donations on Main Street in Noble.

The fundraiser fit well with the goals of Roosevelt Elementary School in Norman, too.

Third-grade teacher Teryle Dionisio read about OU's efforts in an article in *The Transcript* last week.

It fit in perfectly with the social studies program at Roosevelt, which is currently covering communities, she said. So she called OU and got the little orange boxes for the third

graders.

"Sometimes I think it's important for students to know there are communities who aren't as well-off as us," Dionisio said.

The students watched an age-appropriate video Tuesday about children in need around the world, she said.

The children were "surprised and saddened" by what they learned, Dionisio said. After watching the UNICEF video, the students trick-or-treated at the other classrooms in school for change. The students will be collecting money the rest of the week, Dionisio said.

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