

## Community Building Activity

### Record Breaking Attempt

Our school is attempting to break the Guinness World Record for the largest plastic bag sculpture. A giant dinosaur in the UK holds the current record. It is forty-some feet long, over 13 feet tall, and used over 17,000 plastic bags in its construction. I registered our attempt on the Guinness website last October, with a planned date of completion of April 24th, 2010, the Friday of Earth Week and International Service Week. We have been collecting plastic bags ever since. We tie them together, count them, and roll them into balls of 500. Students from other classes who are trying to win a pizza party for being the class to tie and count the most bags have joined us. Each day, students from other classes come to my classroom for their lunch and afternoon recesses to tie bags. They work in groups, laughing and chatting as they work toward their common goal. The competition is friendly, as all want to see us achieve our common goal of breaking the record, as well as win their pizza party.

The district is helping us by storing our finished balls until we need them in April, when we will construct the 24" high poultry netting support for the labyrinth, which will be wound around with the plastic bags. In the center of the labyrinth, four tall posts will be used to support a large ball of plastic bag-covered poultry netting that will represent the earth. The theme of the sculpture is 'Finding our way to a more sustainable world.' On the performance day, the student body will stand in the labyrinth and hand over hand guide the big ball to the center of the labyrinth, following the single path. When the ball gets to the center, they will toss it to the top of the posts where it will rest, over the heads of those who stand in the center. Then all will cheer and make their way out of the labyrinth. The surveyors will measure the total length and height of the sculpture, the photographer will take pictures of the performance and sculpture, the number of plastic bags used will be documented, and all will be sent to the Guinness people.

The record would be fun, but the process has been the true prize. Channel 3 did a piece about the project, and friends and neighbors from around the city have been saving bags for us and dropping them off at the Sentry on Cottage Grove Road. One naysayer left a comment on the Channel 3 website, suggesting that people were using more energy bringing their bags to the drop site than was being saved by recycling, and this may be true, but he was missing the point. The project brings the community together, affirming their interest in caring for the environment, and creating hope that we can make a difference. It brings attention to the new recycling law for plastic bags and gives many children lots of practice counting!