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Kids hope to set world record at racetrack

Santa Ana children to attempt world record for longest continuous chain of pennies.

By **EUGENE W. FIELDS**

SANTA ANA – Children in an after-school program at Thorpe Fundamental Elementary are joining with 35,000 other children throughout Southern California to set a world record – with pennies.

The push for the world record and a spot in the Guinness Book of World Records began as another educational activity of the after-school program, THINK Together, said group spokeswoman Nadia Flores.

Flores said THINK Together, based in Santa Ana, has programs at more than 200 elementary and middle school sites in Southern California and 23 sites in Orange County.

The penny drive began in February as a way to honor the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth and the 100th anniversary of Lincoln's image being featured on the one-cent coin.

Flores said the students, collectively, are attempting to gather 100 miles of pennies, which would amount to 8,448,800 pennies. The pennies will be laid in a chain on Wednesday at the race track at the Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, hopefully enough to circle the 2-mile track 50 times.

The 100 miles of pennies would best the current record of 40 miles, held by a youth group in Fort Scott, Kansas.

Monique Lopez, the site coordinator at Thorpe Fundamental, said the 115 students at Thorpe alone have collected more than a mile of pennies.

"Our goal was to raise \$1,000, and so far we've raised \$1,266.76," Lopez said. "And a mile of pennies is about \$845."

The students used different approaches to collect the pennies.

Viridiana Hernandez, 8, said her family helped her.

"My dad and my mom have pennies in a baby bottle," Hernandez said. "And my mom saved pennies."

Jocelyn Garcia, 9, said her mother used school as a motivation.

"My mom told me each time I did my homework, she would give me 20 pennies," Garcia said. "It helped me to do my homework faster."

David Rojas, 9, said his mother paid him.

"I was helping my mom a little bit by making her bed," Rojas said. "I like it."

Flores said children will begin lining the coins up at 1:30 p.m., with the entire process expected to last almost four hours. Afterward, the pennies will be donated back to the program, she said.

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Thorpe Fundamental Elementary School students Venezia Brisenio and Maite Saldarriaga count and organize pennies for the Miles of Change drive. The drive is part of the THINK Together afterschool program. The program is attempting to lay 100 miles of pennies at the Auto Club Speedway in Fontana to set a world record.