



Millions of Students Raise Millions in Spare Change for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

Olive Garden's 2008-2009 Pasta for Pennies campaign collects \$5.3 million

ORLANDO, Fla., Oct 01, 2009 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX News Network/ -- Elementary, middle and high school students across the country collected \$5.3 million in spare change to support Olive Garden's 15th-annual Pasta for Pennies program benefiting The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS).

(Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20091001/CL85245LOGO>)

Since its inception, Olive Garden's Pasta for Pennies has contributed more than \$47 million to LLS helping to fund blood cancer research and provide services and support to patients and their families.

During a three-week period of the school year, students commit to collecting pocket change to fill collection jars in their classrooms. The class collecting the most money at each school receives a pasta party delivered to their classroom by their local Olive Garden restaurant.

"The dedication of these students, their parents, teachers and administrators is nothing short of remarkable," said Dave Pickens, president of Olive Garden. "Together, through their service every year, they continue to give support, hope and encouragement to patients and their families across the country."

Leading the nation as the top Pasta for Pennies fundraising school for the second consecutive year was Princeton High School in Cincinnati collecting \$38,378.

Other top fundraising schools include:

- Orange High School in Orange, Calif. which raised \$27,037;
- William Mason High School in Mason, Ohio which raised \$20,446; and
- Downey High School in Downey, Calif. which raised \$18,436.

The top fundraising LLS Chapter in the country was the Northern Texas Chapter where 360 schools raised \$395,000.

"Every penny raised through Olive Garden's Pasta for Pennies program brings us one step closer to finding a cure for blood cancers," said John Walter, LLS president and CEO. "We offer our sincere thanks to everyone who joined together throughout the nation to raise \$5.3 million to support our efforts. These results are extraordinary."

Local LLS Chapters are currently recruiting schools in their areas to participate in the 2010 Olive Garden Pasta for Pennies program. To learn more about how your school can take part in this grassroots effort, call (800) 955-4572 or visit www.LLS.org.

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society(R) (LLS) is the world's largest voluntary health agency dedicated to blood cancer. The LLS mission: Cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma, and improve the quality of life of patients and their families. LLS funds lifesaving blood cancer research around the world and provides free information and support services. Founded in 1949 and headquartered in White Plains, NY, LLS has chapters throughout the United States and Canada. To learn more, visit www.LLS.org or contact the Information Resource Center at (800) 955-4572, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET.

Olive Garden is the leading restaurant in the Italian dining segment with 695 restaurants, more than 87,000 employees and \$3.3 billion in annual sales. Olive Garden is a division of Darden Restaurants Inc. (NYSE: DRI), the world's largest company-owned and operated full-service restaurant company. For more information, visit Olive Garden's Web site at www.olivegarden.com.

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