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\$9,000 donation to help kids take field trips

By [Eloise Aguiar](#)

Advertiser Windward O'ahu Writer

KAILUA — Windward students won't be left behind during school field trips for lack of money to pay their way, thanks to a \$9,000 donation that was distributed to five campuses.

Billie and Dean McGill, of Lanikai, have donated the money through Community Helping Schools, an organization that advertises for items that schools request with hopes that someone will donate them.

This time money was sought to pay for supplies, field trips and shoes, and the McGills responded, said Kathie Wells, the organization's founder.

"This is money that is easily used for those types of things and specifically to individually make a difference one child at a time," said Wells.

The schools benefiting from the donation are Waiahole, Ka'a'awa, Kahuku and Waimanalo elementary schools, and Kahuku High & Intermediate School.

The Kahuku schools received \$1,500 each; the others received \$2,000 each.

The money comes from the Billie Fund, set up by the McGills to help students pay for field trips, something Billie McGill couldn't participate in when she was in school in California.

"I was one of those extremely poor kids that couldn't go on field trips and was always made to feel different," said Billie McGill as she drove from school to school dropping off checks on Friday. "My family didn't have any money at all and we got most of our clothes from the church."

McGill said the memories of her childhood are strong and she wouldn't want another child to be left out as she was.

The McGills, who have lived in Hawai'i for five years, followed their children who attended college here after her husband took an early retirement, she said. Her son owns Tiki's Grill and Bar on Kalakaua Avenue.

They first responded to an advertisement for fans and air conditioners for

classrooms, donating air-conditioning units to five schools, she said. Last year they set up the Billie Fund, and this year were able to make a \$9,000 donation from the fund.

Education can't take place without supplies or in sweltering classrooms, she said, adding that she values education, seeing it as a means to escape poverty and improve one's life.

"Education is something no one can ever take away from you," McGill said. "Even for the disadvantaged kids, that's their edge."

Lisa DeLong, Kahuku High and Intermediate principal, said the money will be used to send students to special events such as National History Day, We The People, and speech and debate activities. "To give students who might otherwise not be able to afford these kinds of activities an opportunity to participate, to push their skills to another level, to take advantage of the learning experiences that come with travel to new places."

DeLong said the school will do something to honor the McGills, but hasn't yet decided what that might be.

The school has an account to help students with travel expenses, supplies, athletic shoes and prom tickets. The added money will go further in supporting students, she said, adding that donations always are needed and the McGills' donation is inspiring.

"She is taking action to ensure that student don't have to endure the kinds of hardships she did when she was in school," DeLong said.

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