

Boy turns birthday party into fundraiser

BY HALLIE WOODS

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Evan Bode will tell you that you're never too young to make a difference.

Forgoing all his birthday gifts, Bode invited his entire fourth-grade class to come to his 10th birthday party and bring a donation for the local Kids Matter organization, raising a total of \$700.

"I thought it would be a good opportunity for my 10th birthday to give to kids in need and inspire everybody in the fourth grade to do the same," Bode said in between turns at Chipper's Lanes bowling alley on Sunday.

After being involved in the school's O Ambassadors program, a joint project of Oprah's Angel Network and Free The Children that inspires young people to be global citizens, Bode knew he wanted to do something big.

He began researching the United Way of Larimer County's list of organizations and became interested in the Kids Matter program because it was started by a 13-year-old girl who tried to help abused children by giving them comfort bags.

"It showed that it doesn't matter how young you are, you can make a difference," Bode said.

Bode e-mailed the owner of Chipper's Lanes, asking if the bowling alley would help bring all 66 members of his fourth-grade class at Shepardson Elementary School to his birthday party on Bode's small budget.

"He is actually pretty shy," said Shana Stegner-Bode, Bode's mother. "He stepped out of his comfort zone to do this. It shows how much he wanted to do this."

At 9 or 10 years old, some of Bode's classmates said it would be hard to give up birthday presents from friends and family, but they knew he could do it.

"You're not really getting anything to feel special for your birthday," said Amelia Brull, 10. "He is a nice, kind, caring boy."

Bode said it was not hard to give up birthday presents because of the good feelings he got from helping others.

"It's just sad that some kids don't have all the stuff they need," Bode said.

Kristin Stolte, interim principal at Shepardson, said she believes Bode would never regret his decision to give up his birthday presents.

"I truly believe that years down the road, Evan will remember that he chose to support a charity and the mass effort it took, but he probably wouldn't remember what presents he got," Stolte said. "This is a monumental effort for him."

Evan Bode bowls at his 10th birthday party at Chipper's Lanes on Horsetooth Road on Sunday. Bode, a fourth-grader at Shepardson Elementary School, asked his friends to bring donations for the local nonprofit 'Kids Matter' instead of birthday gifts.

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