

Youngest 'Heroes' host 'Day at the Ranch' to raise funds for local Red Cross

Jessica Layne

Posted March 30, 2011 at 4:36 p.m., updated March 30, 2011 at 4:36 p.m.

YourNews

This story is contributed by a member of the Treasure Coast community and is neither endorsed nor affiliated with TCPalm.com



STACY RANIERI

The Ranieri children and their friends have fun during their day at the Ranch fundraiser for the Martin County Red Cross. From left are Lisa-Nicole Roberts, Dante Zolla, Olivia Ranieri, Nicholas Ranieri and Skylar Fritchie.

PALM CITY — It would be easy to forget that the two young faces, one disguised by face paint and the other helping toddlers hold little chicks and baby goats, were actually heroes. On Sunday, March 20, Olivia Ranieri, 13, and Nicholas Ranieri, 10, of Palm City held a "Day at the Ranch" fundraiser at Marasco Ranch in Palm City Farms as part of their involvement in the Heroes Campaign for the American Red Cross Martin County Chapter. As the youngest participants in the campaign, it was their third year coordinating a creative, family-friendly event as a way to raise the minimum \$1,000 donation.

"My family has known the Ranieri family since the kids were very young and they've always been philanthropic," explained Cathy Balzer, Youth Services Coordinator for the American Red Cross Martin County Chapter. "Three years ago when someone approached their parents to be heroes and their parents weren't able to make the commitment, Olivia and Nicholas jumped right in and asked if they could do it," Balzer added.

That was the beginning of Olivia and Nicholas' fundraising efforts for the Red Cross. The first event was at their home where they showed two movies on a large screen, had popcorn and drinks, and held a small live auction. Last year, they hosted a 'snow party' and had two tons of snow blown onto the front lawn where a massive snowball fight took place. This year, the kids wanted to expand beyond their home. Olivia had the idea to host the event at the Marasco Ranch in Palm City where she and her brother had been enjoying summer camp for many years.

"Of course I said yes right away when they asked me," said Donna Marasco who owns the ranch with her husband Jerry. "They're really good kids and we love doing things to help the community," Marasco added. There was no shortage of activities at the Ranch to entertain children including hay rides, horse and pony rides and elaborate face painting. A huge hit for all the kids was the variety of animals that could be held or pet, from chicks, rabbits, and goats to ferrets, sheep, and a llama. Pizza donated by Big Slice Pizza along with snacks and drinks were provided to about 60 people who attended the event.

With a little help from their parents, Rob and Stacy Ranieri, and a generous group of friends, family and donors who responded through Facebook requests, the Ranieri children were successful in exceeding their goal of \$1,200 to benefit the Red Cross.

Heroes for the American Red Cross is a grassroots fundraising and awareness campaign that helps to spread the word about the services the American Red Cross provides, and also raise money that supports local needs for disaster relief, health and safety education and more.

Each Hero pledges to raise \$1,000 for the Red Cross during the campaign period. Olivia and Nicholas decided to set their goal at \$1,200 for the third year in a row. They have exceed their goal and hope to raise \$1,300 by the end of the campaign "It makes us feel good and we really like doing it," said Olivia Ranieri. "It's also really important that the Red Cross have extra money because of the earthquake in Japan," added Nicholas Ranieri.

About the American Red Cross:

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; teaches lifesaving skills; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a charitable organization — not a government agency — and depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit <http://www.pbtcredcross.org>.

<http://www.tcpalm.com/news/2011/mar/30/youngest-heroes-host-day-at-the-ranch-to-raise-fun/>