

Florida students help save Ross Elevator



Bob Nelson, left accepts a donation from Deb Hadiji for the "Save the Elevator" fund.

By Jill Christensen

ROSS - Why would a classroom of second graders in Florida be interested in a grain elevator in rural Iowa? How would they even learn such a structure existed?

Deb Hadiji, the teacher of this particular class of second graders, learned of the project to save the Ross Elevator, spearheaded by Bob Nelson, on a holiday visit to Audubon County.

Hadiji was spending

Thanksgiving with her father, Rev. Samuel J. Hahn, a resident of the Friendship Home in Audubon.

"Following a delicious Friendship Home dinner, Dad and I were reading the *Audubon County Advocate Journal*," Hadiji stated.

The featured article that week was a story detailing the plea put forth to save the 130-year-old Ross Elevator.

Hadiji said, "Dad piped up and said, 'I preached one of my first sermons at the United Methodist Church in

Ross over 60 years ago.'"

It just so happens that Nelson is also a nurse at the Friendship Home and was able to give Hadiji and Hahn more insight into the project to restore the grain elevator located just across the street from his home.

After the Thanksgiving Day dinner, Hadiji and her sister, Eunice Mennenoh (who is employed by Audubon County Memorial Hospital and married to Audubon native, Phil Mennenoh) took their father and made a trip to Ross to see the elevator. Hadiji filmed the trip on her phone with the intention of sharing it with her class upon returning to Melbourne, Fla.

The Monday after Thanksgiving break Hadiji greeted her second graders at Suntime Elementary School with an assignment asking them to detail what they had done over the break. After the class shared their experiences, she began to tell the class about her time in Iowa. As she was telling her story one of the students asked if the class

could help raise money for the elevator, too.

"I told her I thought it was a great idea," Hadiji said, "but we would have to have the support of the Principal, Mrs. Giombetti."

Giombetti was supportive and encouraged the students to take on the project, suggesting a friendly and persuasive letter could be written and shared with the staff and parents of the children, soliciting donations.

Each of Hadiji's students wrote a letter to share with their families asking for a donation in the amount of

\$1-5. The class worked together to compile and email request to be sent to the staff at Suntime Elementary.

Within a few days time, the children were able to raise \$111.25 to donate to the Save the Elevator project.

Hadiji was able to present the donations to Nelson on a return trip to Audubon in late December. The Hahn family was gathering in Audubon for a family wedding. Relatives and friends from across the country were gathered in Audubon for the wedding of Jonathon Hahn and Laurie

Hile, both of Castle Rock, Colo. in order for Hahn, who is now in the Memory Care Unit, to attend the ceremony.

Hadiji said, "We were thrilled to be able to make this donation and celebrate wonderful things happening all the way from Melbourne, Fla. to Ross, Iowa. We hope to inspire you to make a donation, too. As one of the main things my second graders said in their letters, 'Don't let the Ross Grain Elevator become a lost piece of history.'"

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