

By choosing to be givers, students make hero's wish come true

By Violeta Rocha

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PLANO — A months-long fundraising effort by eighth-grade students at St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic School culminated May 14 as the class used the \$10,000 in donations to make a wish come true for a child.

On that day, as part of a Make A Wish Foundation event, the students transformed the school into “Gotham City” to welcome Abel Alvarez, 4, who has spent a lot of time in hospitals, dealing with kidney failure since he was born. Alvarez’s dream is to visit Disney World.

Alvarez might have no super powers, but he is a real hero, according to his family. His father, Ivan Alvarez, said at hospitals he is known as “Hercules” for his display of bravery while confronting his health condition.

On May 14 at St. Mark, he became “Super Abel” and allied with “Batman and Robin” to save the eighth-graders while conquering villains such as “The Joker,” and hand delivering them to five Plano police officers on hand at the event.

While cheering him on, teachers and students held signs reading, “Go Abel” and “Abel is our Super Hero,” as he waved his blue cape with the letter “A,” walking proudly from classroom to classroom, saving the students

Alvarez’s every step was followed by his crew of supporters that included his two older sisters, Evelyn, 5, and Jacquelyn, 11, who also were



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Abel Alvarez, 4, receives cheers and applause from students as he’s escorted around the school during his Make-A-Wish send-off to Disney World at St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic School on May 14 in Plano.

wearing costumed capes.

Plano Police Chief Greg W. Rushin proclaimed the young hero as “Officer Abel.”

“I have never seen so many eighth-graders smiling at one time. What they have done just touches everybody’s spirit,” said Rushin, a parishioner of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church in Plano.

Nohemi Alvarez, 30, Abel’s mother said the wish granted on

behalf of her son made her feel the presence of the Holy Spirit.

“I’m very moved,” she said.

“I’m honored to help Abel.

He is really excited about helping (save) us,” said eighth-grader Samuel Owen, 14, while classmate Liam Carrollo, 14, added that “hard work pays off.”

“This could not have happened if everyone was not involved. Ms. Stacy Oliver helped us so much. That is exactly how you raised

10,000,” said Regina Aguilar, 14, who helped lead Alvarez throughout the adventure.

Oliver, a religion teacher at the Plano school, said last October the entire class of 69 eighth-graders was motivated to start this fundraising effort while working on their service hours as a group.

“These kids had the option to be givers or takers, and they chose to be givers, over and over again all year,” Oliver said



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Ivan Alvarez leans in to hug his son, Abel, at the end of St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic School’s Make-A-Wish send-off in Plano on May 14.

adding, “This is the highlight of my teaching career.”

Patricia Opon, principal of St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic School, said that service to the community is a cornerstone of what the school wants to instill in its students.

“I believe today exemplifies that that cornerstone has been laid in these eighth-graders,” she said.

Father Clifford Smith, pastor of St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church, called the students’ fundraising project a message for the whole parish community.

“We are called to love God and our neighbor, and our eighth-graders are wonderful examples of responding to God’s call,” he said.