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Walk benefits La. school

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Carmel High event raises funds to buy more textbooks

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CARMEL - One lap around the **Carmel High School** track, early **in a walkathon** to benefit a parochial **school in** hurricane-devastated **Louisiana**, and Christen McDonnell and Lizz Vlad were headed up the hill looking **for** sweatshirts.

"It's freezing," they said on one of the first cold days of the season.

But the 16-year-old juniors had already raised \$100 between them, and they were planning to stick it out as long as they could. Just as soon as they found warmer clothes.

Money collected yesterday will go toward buying textbooks **for** students at the Pope John Paul II Catholic High **School in** Slidell, between New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Because the **school** suffered little damage and was able to open almost immediately after Hurricane Katrina, it has been able to take **in** students from elsewhere, said Tom Breslin, president of the **Carmel High School** parents association.

"The key to communities coming back is to get the **schools** open," he said. "And this **school** was able to take their whole population plus 100 to 130 public **school** kids that were displaced."

For the occasion, Breslin and his 9-year-old daughter, Ciara, wore purple and tiger-striped hats **in** honor of **Louisiana** State University. Ciara added a Pope John Paul II High **School** T-shirt to her ensemble.

The target yesterday was \$20,000 **for Carmel's** newly adopted **school**, but Breslin was keeping the weather **in** mind.

"On a cold day like this, we'll take anything," he said. "If it's \$1, it's more than they had yesterday."

Two young walkers barely seemed to notice the brisk afternoon. Nine-year-old Nick D'Apice had already completed two miles, while his 13-year-old brother, Alex, was on his second mile. They knew no one from **Louisiana**, they said, and had never visited but wanted to do so now.

"I hope I can go," Alex said. "I want to go everywhere."

On hand **for** the event was a 1986 graduate of the Slidell high **school**, Stacia Kooney, who drove from Schenectady, where her husband works **for** General Electric Co. Her 10-year-old daughter, Meredith, accompanied her.

"It think it's great," Kooney said, standing on the track. "It was hard to watch all the stuff that's going on down there. ... It's hard being so far from home."

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