Students Pool Spare Change to Raise Record $6.1 Million for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

Olive Garden's Pasta for Pennies wraps up its most successful fundraising campaign

ORLANDO, Fla., Aug 18, 2010 /PRNewswire via COMTEX News Network/ -- Pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters stacked up to $6.1 million this year for Olive Garden's Pasta for Pennies program as more than three million students from 4,520 elementary, middle and high schools throughout the U.S. pooled their spare change for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS). This record breaking amount brings the total funds raised for LLS by Olive Garden's Pasta for Pennies program to more than $53 million over the last 16 years.

All of the money raised by the students funds blood cancer research and helps LLS to provide services and support to leukemia, lymphoma and myeloma patients and their loved ones.

At each participating Pasta for Pennies school, students fill collection boxes in their classrooms with coins during a designated three-week period in the school year. Olive Garden recognizes the class that collects the most money at each school with a pasta party delivered to their classroom by their local restaurant.

"At Olive Garden, we strive to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others," said Dave Pickens, president of Olive Garden. "The students who make Pasta for Pennies a great success each year are true role models for us to emulate."

The top Pasta for Pennies fundraising school in the nation was Warren High School in Downey, Calif. collecting $37,575.

Other top fundraising schools include:

- Princeton High School in Cincinnati which raised $30,560;
- William Mason High School in Mason, Ohio which raised $29,260; and
- Downey High School in Downey, Calif. which raised $20,585.

The top fundraising LLS Chapter in the country was the Northern Texas Chapter where 255 schools raised $463,838.

"Through our longstanding partnership with Olive Garden and the contributions from students, teachers and school administrators, the Pasta for Pennies program raised an outstanding amount of money for our cause this year," said LLS President and CEO John Walter. "This record-breaking total will help us advance our efforts in our mission to find a cure for all blood cancers."

Local LLS Chapters are currently recruiting schools in their areas to participate in the 2011 Olive Garden Pasta for Pennies program. To learn more about how your school can take part in this grassroots community relations effort, call (800) 955-4572 or visit www.LLS.org.

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society(R) (LLS) is the world's largest voluntary health agency dedicated to blood cancer. The LLS mission: Cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma, and improve the quality of life of patients and their families. LLS funds lifesaving blood cancer research around the world and provides free information and support services. Founded in 1949 and headquartered in White Plains, NY, LLS has chapters throughout the United States and Canada. To learn more, visit www.LLS.org or contact the Information Resource Center at (800) 955-4572, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET.

Olive Garden is the leading restaurant in the Italian dining segment with more than 700 restaurants, more than 87,000 employees and $3.3 billion in annual sales. Olive Garden is a member of the Darden family of restaurants (NYSE: DRI), the world's largest company-owned and operated full-service restaurant company. For more information, visit Olive Garden's website at www.olivegarden.com.

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