



Woodstock Community Unit School District 200

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Thunder Threads help fund activities for Woodstock North special ed students

With encouragement from Woodstock North High School educators, a sophomore life skills student is transforming his hobby into what is turning into a thriving business.

Angelo Smilgis enjoys creating beaded friendship bracelets, which have become popular items on the Thunder campus.

“He started making them just for fun during his free time in class because Angelo has so much energy,” said Woodstock North social worker Morgan Hedgepath.

She said special education staff are always looking for new ideas to teach students valuable skills, including socialization, handling money, and customer service.

For example, some students work on a school coffee cart selling bagels and coffee to Woodstock North and District 200 staff members. Still, other students make and sell soaps. The goal for all of these programs is to help students become employable after graduation.

Funds from these businesses help pay for life skills students' community outings, such as going to the movies or other activities that help teach them how to interact with members of the community.

Angelo's bracelet hobby seemed like a perfect opportunity for him and his life skills classmates. Junior Jairo Castaneda Sanchez assists Angelo with the business, while other students help with deliveries.

On Dec. 5, Angelo and Jairo set up a Thunder Threads table in the Commons at lunchtime and sold \$90 worth of bracelets to their peers. Some of the \$3 bracelets say “Thunder,” while others are specific to choir, theater, volleyball or other clubs and sports teams. Custom bracelets are also available for \$5.

“It went really well. Angelo loves to socialize, so it was great to get that energy out,” Hedgepath said.

More upcoming lunchtime sales are expected after winter break, and Angelo said he's excited to get back to work.

“I like making the bracelets, and I felt so happy when the kids bought them,” he said.

Anyone interested in ordering Thunder Thread bracelets can also email Hedgepath at mhedgepath@wcusd200.org.