

Every Halloween, many of our students go Trick or Treating and come home with pounds of candy. Parents and teachers alike worry about the overindulgence of sugar. AEA member and Elementary Health Teacher Melanie Sutton saw the problem and created a program to combat the sugar woes, called "Treats for Troops."

On her own time, Sutton coordinated funding from the American Legion and volunteers from two elementary schools to collect donated candy from students and parents and ship it overseas to our soldiers. In the past three years, this program has grown to 11 elementary schools across the district.

The students who choose to donate candy receive a small prize in exchange-- prizes that Sutton spent her own money to buy. Sutton explains to her students that the soldiers don't always receive enough calories in their rations for the amount of energy they expend each day in trainings and missions, so this candy will be burned right off and not turned to extra pounds. The candy will be spread out to many troops, whereas here each child may have collected as many as 10 pounds of candy!

In her letter home about the program, Sutton explained, "Global sugar consumption for kids increases by about 2% annually and currently sits at 50 million tons per year, which means parents need to be even more watchful than ever before. Too much candy can lead to hyperactivity and weight gain, as well as cavities or worse. In some cases, the wrong types of candy can also lead to broken teeth and damaged braces."

This year students from 11 Elementary Schools in ASD (Aurora, Chester Valley, Fairview, Homestead, Inlet View, Klatt, Mt. Spurr, Ocean View, Rogers Park, Sand Lake and Taku) participated in a program developed by Health Specialist, Melanie Sutton. The students donated their Halloween candy to our courageous troops serving our country in the Middle East and beyond.

"Our children were very generous and donated 1,154 pounds of candy!" said Sutton.

"My room was filled with boxes and bags that I had picked up from around the district. After I weighed and boxed all of the candy, volunteers from Elmendorf AFB came by to help transport the candy to the American Legion for shipment to the troops.

"I want to thank all who participated for their support of the Treats For Troops program. I look forward to even higher numbers next year!"