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# Elementary students help turn trash into treats

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Decked out in his pilgrim hat, Cedar Heights Elementary School kindergarten student Cameron Switzer licks his spoon as he enjoys an ice cream sundae at the Cedar Falls school Monday, Nov. 24, 2009. The treat for the entire school was their reward for their participation in a battery recycling contest. (RICK CHASE / Courier Staff Photographer)

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CEDAR FALLS - Caroline Schafer didn't wait to get back to her kindergarten classroom before digging into her single-serving sundae.

"Yum. This is good," she said, just moments after a scoop of colorful sprinkles was piled into her vanilla ice cream cup.

Schafer knows this sweet surprise isn't the norm at Cedar Heights Elementary. She also knows why the students and staff were treated to the cold afternoon snacks on Tuesday, courtesy of Cold Stone Creamery.

"We had the most batteries," Schafer said.

Earlier this month Cedar Heights students squared off with Southdale Elementary students to see which school could collect the most batteries for National Recycling Week. The program was a joint effort between Nancy Breen's Interstate All Battery Center in Ames and the University of Northern Iowa's Recycling & Reuse Technology Transfer Center.

Breen said the results "way outweighed" her expectations. Cedar Heights students collected more than 2,500 pounds of batteries, while Southdale students turned in more than 1,500 pounds.

"I was kind of surprised by what they turned in," Breen said. "We had quite a few bigger batteries, like automotive and tractor batteries. I think this just goes to show just how many batteries are sitting around out there and people don't know what to do with them."

Jennifer Bruss, an RRTTC program and community outreach coordinator, said many times batteries just get tossed in the trash because there are no local recycling options. She has been working with each elementary to increase paper, plastic and cardboard

recycling in the schools. The other schools will have the opportunity to participate in a battery recycling program this spring.

"It was great to work with Nancy and Interstate. They were able to come in and fill a specific niche for us," Bruss said, between scoops of chocolate chips and sprinkles.