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**Teen couple raises \$210 for children**

Loose Change Drive donations pay for 50 toys

By [George Basler](#)  
Press & Sun-Bulletin

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APALACHIN -- Sara Wasileski and Gregg Martinez got some doubtful looks, and some people were downright suspicious.

But that didn't deter the two teenagers as they walked door-to-door collecting loose change to make Christmas a little brighter for some children.

The couple, who are dating, came up with the idea and named it the "Loose Change Drive." They then walked through Apalachin neighborhoods, knocking unannounced on doors to solicit donations to buy toys for needy families.

They wanted to take a small step to make the world a better place, Wasileski explained.

"At first, people thought these two kids were pretty idealistic to try this," said the Rev. Nicholas Keeney, pastor at Park Terrace Community United Methodist Church in Apalachin, where Wasileski is a member.

But the idealism of youth paid off.

When Wasileski reported that they had raised \$210, people were genuinely surprised, Keeney said.

"It's pretty amazing that two high school kids could come up with this much on their own without a formal structure," he added.

The teenagers said they got reactions ranging from suspicion to surprise to support.

Some people didn't believe them, said Wasileski, 17, a senior at Owego Free Academy.

"Some were kind of skeptical that we weren't with any organization. Some were hesitant," noted Martinez, 18, a senior at Vestal High School. He remembered one particularly discouraging, cold day when the two knocked on a series of doors only to come up empty.

But other people willingly parted with donations and encouraging words. "Some people felt it was really great we were doing this," Wasileski said.

The payoff came when the two used the donations to buy more than 50 toys, which they gave to the Apalachin



PHOTO PROVIDED

Sara Wasileski, an Owego Free Academy senior, and Gregg Martinez, a Vestal High senior, collected \$210 by going door-to-door. The money was used to purchase toys, which were donated to the Apalachin Elementary School toy and food drive.

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Elementary School. The school, in turn, donated the toys to the Apalachin Lions Club to distribute to families in the community.

The reward is in knowing some children are going to have a nicer Christmas and "you're the reason," Wasileski said.

"It was cold, but I didn't have second thoughts," Martinez said.

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It's great to see kids doing something good to help make the world a better place. If more kids did stuff like this when they are bored instead of causing trouble, we'd all be better off. Thank you!!

Posted by: **darcywaz** on Mon Dec 17, 2007 2:24 pm

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it's really nice to see that there are still good kids. i'm happy to see a story showing the good in these kids, because most stories are about teens misbehaving. thank you for making the holidays brighter for all of us, your spirit of giving is going to make a difference in the lives of many children this holiday season. merry christmas to all. 😊 😊

Posted by: **crazygirlandi** on Mon Dec 17, 2007 8:14 am

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