


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Students break world record cooking with sunlight - A group of students got together to break a world record — and do some good for the less fortunate while they were at it.

Miami Herald, The (FL) - Sunday, April 29, 2012

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Students at Miami Country Day School in Miami Shores set the first Guinness world record for the most cookies baked in one hour using solar ovens. On April 20 — two days before Earth Day — middle and high school students at the school gathered outside to start frantically making the cookie dough from scratch, placing them on racks and into the 40 different solar ovens.

Matthew Cohen, 16, and his mother, Allison Cohen, organized the event and said that setting the world record was a gimmick to get everyone excited. The real reason for the event was to raise awareness about solar cooking. After the event, the 40 ovens were to be donated to Haiti and the cookies donated to Feeding South Florida.

Since the earthquake in Haiti two years ago, there has been a cholera outbreak and a decrease in wood supply for fires, and Cohen believes these ovens can drastically improve Haiti's quality of life. Solar ovens can also help with water pasteurization for people who do not have access to clean drinking water.

Cohen's interest in solar cooking started in fourth grade. He was involved in an organization called YouthCaN, a global youth-run organization that uses technology to educate people about environmental problems. During his time in YouthCaN, Cohen gave demonstrations on solar cooking.

In eighth grade, after the Haiti earthquake, Cohen decided to launch his own website called "Power from the Sun." The website was meant to educate people on solar cooking.

But the idea for the World Record attempt came from an assignment from Cohen's ethics class.

"My teacher asked us to think of an event that can both impact the environment and the community," said Cohen.

After talking the assignment over with his parents, they decided to come up with the Power from the Sun World Record Attempt.


"We decided this was the best idea because we had everyone going insane — because it's the world record, everyone wants to be part of it," he said. "Ever since I was a kid, and my mom would buy me the books, it's been a dream of mine."


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Sam Cohen, Matthew's brother, wondered what was going to be done with the cookies after they were baked.

"After seeing an episode of 60 Minutes about hungry children in America, I asked my brother what he planned on doing with the cookies. I told him we should give them to the children who don't get a chance to have cookies," Sam Cohen said.

Matthew went right along with the idea, and the event started to shape itself.

"We knew it would be the perfect combination. We knocked all three out of the park," Matthew Cohen said.

To get the ovens, families from the school sponsored them for \$250 each, and sponsorships were also being sought with a goal of \$10,000 to cover all of the costs of the event.

John Davies, Head of School for Miami Country Day School, was thrilled to allow the event.

"It's a lot of work and a lot of coordination, but it looks like it worked out," Davies said.

The event, which was run completely by students, had its trials and errors. With the beaming sun, some of the chocolate chips melted, making the cookies into a new recipe, "marble cookies," as Allison Cohen named them. Although the weather forecast said otherwise, the sun was beaming down and the heat was shown on the children's red cheeks.

At the two-minute mark, students were running, desperately trying to get the cookies to the record table before the time ran out — the adult-sized oven mitts made this a challenging feat.

At the hour mark, time was up. Students waited impatiently for the judges to count.

In order to legally set the record, the cookies had to be at least 2 inches in diameter, fully cooked and at least 1,000 had to be made.

At the end of the timer, the official judges — Micah Edelstein owner of NeMesis Bistro, and director of Miami Culinary Institute International Hospitality Center John Richards — carefully measured and counted the cookies. After a loud drum roll by the anxious students, the goal was exceeded with a total of 1,225 cookies made.

The cookies were then donated to residents at Victory Outreach and Miami Rescue Mission through Feeding South Florida. Alisha Press from Feeding South Florida attended the event and was amazed at the effort.

"It's just outstanding and shows true young leadership," Press said. "This food doesn't just go to homeless people you see on the streets, but to people who have lost their jobs and their homes in this economy."

Matthew was nervous at first, and a bit skeptical on whether he and his classmates achieved their goal.

"I didn't think we were going to make it," said Matthew Cohen. "I feel on top of the world right now; nothing can bring me down at this point."

Allison Cohen said that whether the record was set or not, she would've been just as proud.

"The record is one thing, but to see all the kids in action and giving back and donating the cookies and ovens was the real gift for me," said Allison Cohen, who through the help of a microphone was a source of structure to the somewhat chaotic day. "The kids got to see that the gift of one voice can make a difference and they can really change the world."

More info about Power from the Sun and how to make donations can be made at www.powerfromthesun.us.

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Index Terms: Miami Country Day School; School for Miami Country Day School; Victory Outreach and Miami Rescue Mission

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