



Caption: Hamish Whittington-Speck, 5, participates in the gnome toss as his father, Alan Whittington, watches yesterday during the Harry Potter Trivia Night and Galleon Games at Hickman High School. The event raised money for the Eliminate Project

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## *Harry Potter-themed fundraiser aids charity*

By Catherine Martin  
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Last night, Hickman High School was magically transformed into Hogwarts castle from the Harry Potter franchise of books and movies. Outside, "muggles," or non-magical folk, who stopped in were asked to go to Gringotts Bank to exchange their American dollars for galleons, and then they got the chance to buy a butterbeer, get their fortunes told or play a variety of Potter-themed games, such as gnome tossing. Youngsters could even stop by an owlery, with live owls from the MU Raptor Rehabilitation Project, to mail a letter to Hogwarts and learn more about the creatures. Later in the evening, groups gathered inside to participate in Harry Potter trivia.

The enchanted event was sponsored by the Columbia Kiwanis Club to raise money for the Eliminate Project, a Kiwanis international effort to do away with maternal and neonatal tetanus. The disease kills around 60,000 babies each year, according to the Eliminate website. A Harry Potter-themed event, the group decided, would be a great way to attract a diverse crowd. "The Harry Potter books and movies are so popular, we thought we'd be able to find a lot of Harry fans out there, and I think that's coming true," said Susan Daly, president-elect of the Kiwanis club. Dino Ricciotti, dressed as Hagrid — a half-giant character in the Potter series — stopped at all the sites with daughters Cynthia Ricciotti, 9, and Mary Ricciotti, 10, each sporting a different Hogwarts scarf.

Family members are big Potter fans, having watched all the movies and read all the books multiple times. Mary said she likes "things that don't exist," such as witches and wizards, because she'd love to be one, and Cynthia said she enjoys "all the suspense." Although Dino said he had never heard of the cause, the Potter theme appealed to his family. "It just seemed like a fun thing to do on a Friday night, and ... it's for a good cause, so that makes it all the better," he said. It's that appeal that made the theme such a good fit for a fundraiser, said Angela Speck, an astronomy professor at MU and the master of ceremonies for the evening. "I can't imagine an age it doesn't work for," she said.

Speck, originally from England, said she was asked to help out with the event because she "has the accent for it" and saw it as a good cause. She brought her whole family with her to the event — husband Alan Whittington, and sons Xander, 8, and Hamish, 5 — and said the event turned out "amazing." "They've done an awesome job, I'm very impressed," she said. Dumbledore's Army, a Potter club at Hickman, partnered with the Kiwanis Club to put the event together and each member came up a theme for a booth, such as "dunk a Death Eater." Daly said she was impressed with the setup, too, and the trivia participation was more than the Kiwanis expected. Each team paid a minimum of \$100 to participate and 30 signed up to participate, Daly said. Additionally, the group also had a silent auction, raffle and the outdoor games to raise money, as well as an astronomy night at Rock Bridge High School last week that raised \$500. The goal of the project is to raise \$57,000 by mid-year 2015, said Naomi Cupp, chairwoman of the Eliminate project.