

## STUDENTS' EFFORTS AID AFRICAN VILLAGES



Inspired by a novel, fifth-graders across the Fox Chapel Area School District recently completed a project to make life better for a nation halfway around the world.

After reading “A Long Walk to Water” in their enriched English language arts (ELA) classes, students, their classmates, and their teachers embarked on the Iron Giraffe Challenge to benefit Water for South Sudan, a nonprofit that helps to ensure sustainable access to clean water and hygiene training for villages in the war-ravaged country. The novel, by Linda Sue Park, intertwines the real-life experience of Water for South Sudan founder Salva Dut, who escaped civil war in South Sudan in the 1980s, and the fictional story of Nya, a young village girl that spends hours each day fetching water for her family.

Through a series of fundraising activities spearheaded by the enriched ELA students, the elementary schools raised more than \$2,200 districtwide to support Water for South Sudan.

“Students immediately wanted to participate as soon as we watched a TED Talk and live-stream video of Salva Dut and Linda Sue Park during culminating activities to the novel,” says Kerr Elementary gifted support teacher Carli Hackett. “The students went on the website on their own and started sharing collection ideas. They remained excited the whole way through the planning process and into the collection. They were even willing to give up recess to see their vision through.”

“I was very moved by the enthusiasm of the Hartwood fifth-grade teachers and students to participate in our cause,” adds Erin Wetherill, gifted support teacher at Hartwood Elementary. “The enriched ELA students created a slideshow and presentation that showcased the hardships and the reality of the people that live in South Sudan, thus making it real and relatable for our students, many of whose lives are very different from the characters in the novel. Our goal was \$250, and I was blown away by the amount of support that poured in from families, students, and staff. Fox Chapel is a very special place where generosity, kindness, and compassion are abundant.”



*“Our goal was \$250, and I was blown away by the amount of support that poured in from families, students, and staff. Fox Chapel is a very special place where generosity, kindness, and compassion are abundant.”*

*– Erin Wetherill*

*Hartwood Elementary School Teacher*

At least one student realized a benefit in addition to helping those in need 7,000 miles from Pittsburgh.

“Sometimes helping other people can help yourself,” says Hartwood fifth-grader Sarah Sejar.