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## Kids' charity goes global

Fifth-grade students at the Bragg Intermediate School in Chester are learning about the power of helping those less fortunate and about the culture of a country almost a world away.

As part of the first "Classroom-to-Classroom" initiative by the school, the students collected books for a partner school in South Africa through a connection with the Global Literacy Project, a New Jersey-based nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering community-based literacy initiatives worldwide, especially in areas of great need.

The literacy project book drive culminated in a sorting and packaging event by the students and volunteers at the school on Dec. 6. The fifth-graders, members of the Global Literacy Project, teachers, parents and others packed more than 13,000 books. Three students collected about 1,000 books each, organizers said.

In addition to the book drive, 44 students in Meryl Ironson's fifth-grade language arts and social studies classes are participating in multi-cultural units of study on South Africa and are exchanging letters with their counterparts from the Randfontein Primary School in South Africa.

"We are very excited about this great educational program," said schools Superintendent Christina Van Woert. "It is a dynamic, interactive way for students to learn about children their age in other areas of the world and to see how they live, how they learn and how they see the world we share."

Bragg School Principal Dan Johnson said: "As our students continue their education, they will learn that they live in a continually growing global environment. This project is an excellent way to help them learn how their participation and caring will add to this environment and help to change the world for the better."

Ironson, who brought the Global Literacy Project to the Bragg School, also said: "My students are so enthusiastic about the program. They were thrilled by the initial presentation on life in South Africa from the GLP representatives this month. They can't wait to start sharing their stories with their South African counterparts and to hear more about what it's like to live there.

"It's a wonderful, multi-cultural program that will teach our students so much about sharing what we have while learning about a new culture. Through this relationship, we will be able to expose our students to a whole world outside of their own town," she said.

Ironson said she also will be collaborating with her partner teacher from South Africa on the creation of a children's poetry anthology, a collection of short stories and poems written by the children of Chester and Randfontein.

"We are very excited about this great educational program." -- Christina Van Woert, schools superintendent.

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