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Observer-Tribune

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GLOBAL LITERACY



Photo by Debbie Weissman

A global literacy project is under way at the Pingry School and students have been collecting books from families, churches and other organizations. The books will be shipped to South Africa where Pingry parents and students will travel this summer to help distribute the books and build a library for villagers who now have a handful of books so valued by them that children can only look — but not touch. Books can be left at the Pingry School, Martinsville Road, in Bernards Township and at Christ the King Church in New Vernon. More than 100 students showed up at Pingry on Saturday to work on the project — and enjoy pizza. The three organizers of the program, from left, are Christina Vanech of Chester and Emma and Chloe Carver of Mendham Township.

PINGRY SCHOOL PROJECT

The task? Collect 20,000 books

The goal? A new library in South Africa

By DAN KAMIENSKI
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Pingry School students rallied together Saturday, Feb. 24 at the school in Bernards Township to sort and package more than 15,000 donated books for the Global Literacy Project (GLP).

The books were donated by students in all grade levels at the school.

Pingry sophomore Emma Carver of Mendham Township learned of the Global Literacy Project while volunteering on a Community Service day where she was working next to Olubayi Olubayi and Denniston Bonadie, founders of the literacy project.

Getting Involved

After spending the day talking with Olubayi and Bonadie, Emma, and her siblings, sister Chloe, an eighth grader at Pingry, and twin brothers Sean and Reeve, who attend the Pingry lower school, decided to join with Rutgers University students and participate in the ambitious project.

The Global Literacy Project is a non-profit organization committed to fostering community-based literacy initiatives throughout the world. Illiteracy, as a cause and effect of poverty, reinforces long-term underdevelopment in many countries.

Bonadie, vice president and chief operating officer of the GLP, explained their mission of being "committed to fostering community-based literacy initiatives throughout the world," and the need of donated reading material to stock libraries and offer youth around the world access to these books.

The Carvers started organizing the Pingry event with Bonadie in December.

Emma Carver presented the idea to Pingry Headmaster Nat Conard who was enthusiastic to participate in the project.

Shelley Hartz, director of the school's Community Services,

decided that Pingry's Peer Groups, normally alone on their community service day would help in the packing and sorting of the donated books.

"This is the first time in 22 years of Peer Leadership that we've attempted a class-wide service project," she wrote to parents.

Pingry's Peer Groups consist of a group of freshman with two senior advisers designed as a "way to get advice and help transition through high school," said Emma.

The peer groups are strategically organized to foster new relationships within the freshman class by pairing students in groups unfamiliar to them.

"They ensure meeting new people, outside of teams and extra-curricular activities" which are chosen by the students," Conard explained. "This opportunity helps the students think beyond the borders of the county, New Jersey and the nation."

With the help of 10 other schools and libraries, they hope to collect 20,000 books for a village outside of Johannesburg, South Africa.

More than 100 Pingry student volunteers and numerous parents came to sort and pack the books at the Feb. 24 event.

Stacking the books evenly in boxes helps preserve them for the long voyage to South Africa.

Mike Virzi of Basking Ridge, facilities manager at Pingry, will shrink-wrap all the boxes and store the books in an empty classroom until they are transported to a warehouse, awaiting shipment this summer.

In addition, the task of sorting through the mountains of books fell to the volunteers. Organizing by subject and removing ethnocentric and non-educational material, they worked most of Saturday, but will hold one more packing day in May.

Bonadie explained that from here the books will be put on pallets and shipped to a warehouse storing another 150,000. The GLP



Photos by Debbie Weisman

These project organizers are headed to South Africa this summer with the Global Literacy Project to help build a new library. They are, from left, Chip Carver, his wife, Ann Delaney of Mendham Township, Reeve and Sean Carver of Mendham, Denniston Bonadie, co-founder of the Global Literacy Project, Chloe and Emma Carver of Mendham Township and Christina Vanech of Chester.



From left, Andrew Logerto of Bernardsville, Nic Meiring of Summit and Billy McFarland of Short Hills help organize packed books.

plans to send a 40-foot container to South Africa between June and July. They will be sent to an area containing seven schools and two orphanages.

Plans are for a community library, with a science room with microscopes and a dozen computers.

In the beginning of August, local families including the Carvers, will travel to South Africa to help in the renovation of an old building into the new library. They will aid in the design of the library as well as the stacking of thousands of books on the shelves.

"It'll be really cool to see different kinds of places and see how other people live; to experience a different culture," said

Chloe Carver about her upcoming voyage.

"We are so pleasantly astonished," said Bonadie of the students' compassion and effort. "It really says something about the sense of global citizenship that has been inculcated here."

The future packing date will be announced closer to May and donations can still be made at Christ the King Church in the New Vernon section of Harding Township.

On the volatile continent of Africa where armed conflict is a part of daily life, the new community library will bear the motto: "Arm the Brain."

For additional information on the GLP, visit their Web site at www.glpinc.org.

The Bernardsville News

www.bernardsvillenews.com

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GLOBAL GIVING



Photo by Debbie Weisman

More than 100 students of the Pingry School in Bernards Township came to school Saturday, Feb. 24, to sort through thousands of donated books that will eventually be shipped to South Africa this spring as part of a Global Literacy Project being undertaken by the school. Among those boxing the more than 14,000 titles collected so far were students Ashley Hough, left, and Mimi Kornfeld, both of Basking Ridge.