

USA students develop literacy on West Rand

Witfontein - The notion of volunteerism has trickled down from the days of J.F. Kennedy to benefit communities and schools in and around the West Rand.

The benefit has come in the form of over 50 000 books, which were sorted and collected by students in New Jersey, United States - which will be distributed to communities and schools in Randfontein, Kagiso and areas in Johannesburg.

On 4 August this group of Americans joined staff members and local dignitaries at the Carrol Shaw Memorial Centre (CSMS), an alcohol and drug regeneration programme in Witfontein, to celebrate their donation which will attempt to alleviate the shortage of books in specific areas and institutions.

The founder of the CSMC, Reverend Zacharia Motaung was excited to be part of this book drive.

"Today we just want to show our gratitude and appreciation for these families who went out of their way to aid the development in our area."

According to the director of corporate and community affairs at the Global Literacy project (GLP), based in the US, Wendell Thomas: "This project reinforces the notion of volunteerism - a notion which has been a key element in undergraduate education in the US.

"However, this notion has trickled down towards elementary level where students are compelled to make a difference in the world through community service."

According to Thomas the GLP is a New Jersey-based non-profit organisation driven by a humane desire to help people in economically poorer countries acquire literacy, education and development.

According to Anne DeLaney, the mother of four students from Pingry Middle School in New Jersey who initiated the book drive: "This contribution could not have grown, if it was not for the involvement of all the families, friends and schools in our area."

Quoted in the Vanity Fair she said: "The initial goal was to collect 20 000 (from friends and family), and right now



The foreign "angels" from New Jersey with local dignitaries and members of the Carrol Shaw Memorial Centre in Witfontein at the start of a book drive.

we are at 56 000 books."

The more than a dozen US students spent approximately five months collecting, sorting and boxing books as well as raising funds to ship the books to South Africa.

"We really wanted to bring books still in a good condition. Books anybody would be proud of receiving," Anne told the Herald.

The excitement were felt in the air when local dignitaries and staff members of the Carrol Shaw Memorial Centre welcomed these foreign "angels" and showed them just one of the libraries, where the books would end-up - a library build in honour of some of these foreign donors.

A library that would not just enhance the literacy of the local community, but also serve as a beacon of hope of more to come.