

Sweet Home Middle supports water project

by ANNA WALTERS
Reporter

After reading aloud “A Long Walk to Water” by Linda Sue Park, students at Sweet Home Middle School have teamed up to help raise money for the Ugandan Water Project.

“We’re all connected, and we thought about how water is one of the things that connects us all because it’s such a huge need,” said sixth-grade teacher David Etkin.

The story not only follows the “Lost Boys of Sudan” but the character Nya, who makes a trip to collect water for her village. The water source is contaminated.

“It’s an important book because it opens students eyes to the larger world,” said Etkin. “I think most of us, Americans, we spend a lot of our time self-focused and looking at what we have and what we don’t have.”

Etkin says there are other people in the world who are happy yet have less, and those who live here can do small things to help.

Last year, Sweet Home’s sixth-grade class participated in a Walk for Water and raised more than \$12,000 for water collection tanks. This year each grade-level is involved and will be filling gallon jugs with water to walk around the school’s track.

Kevin Schleicher, a technology teacher and football coach, also

worked with some students to rig up a water collection system so they can fill their containers with reclaimed water.

Emme Kasprzyk, a sixth-grader at the school, says its current goal is to raise \$20,000 to benefit the Ugandan Water Project.

“The book kind of describes everything that the one character feels so you kind of get to experience it with them through the book,” she said. “When you have all that information and you know you just want to do something ... so you take it and run with it.”

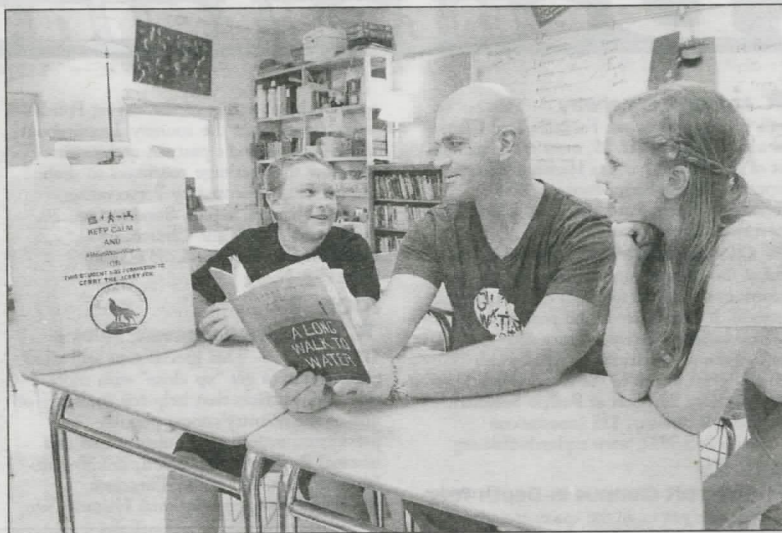
Emme has taken her passion home each day by going door to door and asking neighbors and family members if they would like to donate to the project. She says she has raised \$300.

Seventh-grader Matty Carlini raised money by putting a slot at his church at the Newman Center at the University at Buffalo. Matty’s priest let him and a friend give a speech about the project. Matty says he has raised \$100.

“I told them the money is going straight to Africa to help them and keep people safe from new diseases,” he said. “And another thing is, we told them it’s just going to give the kids a second chance at life.”

Etkin was able to travel to Africa in the summer and view Hope International School’s water source.

He said that last year the students were raising money for the water tanks and knew it would



Twelve-year-old Matty Carlini, left; David Etkin, sixth-grade teacher at Sweet Home Middle School; and 10-year-old Emme Kasprzyk, discuss the book “A long Walk To Water” by Linda Sue Park, as they prepare for their schoolwide Walk for Water to benefit the Ugandan Water Project.

Photo by Jim Smerecak

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make a difference in the lives of the Ugandan people. However, they didn’t know them.

“But this year, because of the pictures that I was able to take and being able to tell a little bit of my story, we actually know one of the villages we are going to provide a tank for,” Etkin said.

He says when students are able to look outside themselves and look at the world around them while growing up, they can see what they can do — even if it’s helping one person.

Matty says Sweet Home Middle’s logo is on the tanks to show

the people who did this for them and who cares for them.

“When I’d visit [Africa], I’d say your brothers and sisters from America,” Etkin said.

He encouraged students to donate money — even if it was just \$1 — so they could say they were part of the project.

“I hope we do good on Wednesday and hope that the people that are getting our tanks have a better future ahead of them,” said Matty, who was referring to today’s walk around the track.

To donate, visit www.ugandanwaterproject.com/sweethome.