

Summerhill students send goat, books to Haiti

By Gillian Christie

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When a teacher at Summerhill Elementary School heard a special announcement on the radio on her way to work one morning, she was inspired.

Sheila Morgan-Paul heard that Fredericton's Mayor Brad Woodside was purchasing goats for families in Haiti and he was challenging anyone and everyone to do the same, knowing how much of a difference this could make in the lives of many in one of the poorest countries in the world that is still trying to recover from a devastating earthquake that occurred there almost four years ago.

Morgan-Paul brought the idea up to other members of her teaching team and they all immediately agreed the Kids for Haiti fundraiser was something meaningful their students could work on.

"I thought, wow, I think our Grade 4 students could do that because we love to fundraise and we love to help out," Morgan-Paul said.

The initiative was immediately undertaken: two fundraisers were planned and carried out - a lemonade stand and a Halloween hat day.

"That was a great fundraiser because we took in lots of money very, very quickly," Morgan-Paul said. "With those two fundraisers we were able to raise our goal which was being able to get two goats for families in Haiti and (some literacy materials)."

Originally, the students thought they might want to purchase a pig for a family but, after talking to Bernie Zebarth, a FreddyLink project co-ordinator, they found out that the people in Haiti had specifically requested goats and reading materials.

"The thing is, we're giving the people of Haiti what they wanted, what they asked for," Zebarth told the students on the day of the presentation of their cheque just two weeks after fundraising began. "They asked for goats, they asked for fruit trees and they asked for help with literacy."

The students of Summerhill were able to accomplish a lot in this effort in a short amount of time.

"What you're doing, this is fantastic," Zebarth said. "I'm really proud of you folks today who've done a great job because this is going to make a huge difference."

FreddyLink is an organization that links partners here with partners in Haiti to help alleviate some of the problems and stress people there are facing.

"You like to help your neighbour and now the world is so connected that the people in Haiti, they really are our neighbours," Zebarth said. "We're just helping out our neighbours. They're in a really difficult spot. They're in a place where the parents don't have enough food to feed their families."

These goats will help in many different areas, he said, from food to making money off the milk and offspring. "They'll be able to feed their families, to work, to grow their communities," Zebarth said. "It's really important, what you're doing here. You're really changing the lives of a couple of families in

Haiti. It's a wonderful thing."

He said he's always amazed at how generous and willing to help people here in New Brunswick are, especially school students. He's had opportunity to visit Haiti

on three different occasions and has presented gifts like these to the people there.

"I'm just really excited about the possibility of being able to be a part of the process," he said. "The people of Haiti are just so thankful. They have a hard time actually expressing their gratitude."

Grade 4 students Brett Carrier and Virginia Hayward were excited to participate in the fundraisers and having the opportunity to help in such a meaningful way.

"I thought it would be a lot harder than just making up fundraisers and I thought it would take the whole year," Hayward said.

It was all a lot of fun.

Carrier said her favourite part was being able to take the information home to share with her family. Together, she and her mom, cracked open every piggy bank in the house and came up with \$38 to donate to the cause.

"I came up with \$38 so my mom went into her purse and gave me a toonie (making it an even \$40)," Carrier said. "To me, \$40 isn't a ton ... but it would be a big help to them."