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Read, and the world reads with you

Northwest Elementary has a novel idea that promotes reading and charity. Can you help with postage or books?

Times staff

HUDSON — There may be no richer feeling than brightening the world of someone half a world away.

The kids at Northwest Elementary School — who sent about 100 books to needy children in Tanzania last school year — hope to send a shipment twice that big to impoverished students in India.

That's not a trivial undertaking at Northwest Elementary, where four out of every five students qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch. Most of the kids can't afford to buy the books that will eventually get shipped overseas.

About a quarter of the students are able to bring in \$8 to the spring book fair, and that money helps buy books for everyone at Northwest Elementary, guidance counselor Lisa Peart said. Additional books are donated by other schools and civic groups.

The Northwest kids spend a



Special to the Times

Tanzanian students received about 100 books from kids at Northwest Elementary in the last OCHO Project. Next up: India.

summer enjoying their books, then “pay it forward” by sending the books to students in another part of the world, she said. The effort is part of the “OCHO Project: Read for a Need,” a character-based service learning project to improve literacy, encour-

age a love of reading, and teach kids that you help yourself when you help others. OCHO stands for Opportunities for Children to Help Others.

“They’ve had something really great done for them. They’ve gotten four or five free books,” Peart

said of her students. “Now that they’ve had something really great done for them, they need to turn around and do something nice for other kids around the world.”

Students are getting ready to do just that. But first they need to raise money for postage. Sending about 200 books roughly 8,000 miles will cost about \$300, Peart figures. The student council is starting to plan some fundraisers.

Northwest Elementary is also seeking children’s books to send to India or to sell at its Oct. 15 fall festival to raise money for playground equipment. Donations may be dropped off at the front office.

Peart plans to ship the books to India in November. The next lesson for the students is what comes back: photos and letters from abroad showing what life is like. Last year the kids at Northwest learned that the students in Tanzania sit on stones, not chairs, and lack many basics, from school meals to crayons.

FAST FACTS

How to help

Northwest Elementary is accepting children’s books and appropriate adult books. Some will be sent to needy children in India; others will be sold to raise money for Northwest Elementary. Donations should be dropped off by Oct. 8 at the front office of the school at 14302 Cobra Way, Hudson. For information call (727) 774-4700.

But they also saw pictures of joyous children they’ve never met holding the books sent by their American friends.

“There would be pictures where they (Northwest kids) would say, ‘Hey, that’s my book that kid is holding up!’” Peart said. “That was neat for them to see their book went halfway around the world.”