

A green dream

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 26 May 2011 19:29 -



FFA's vision of helping earth, others comes to fruition While other seventh-grade classmates were making plans for the summer, Jessica Schmidt was thinking about the school supplies she saw filling up school trash cans.

"I was frustrated," Jessica said about seeing both new and gently used supplies that were thrown away. "But I didn't know how to go about dealing with the problem."

What she did realize was that other people could use the notebooks, crayons, colored pencils and other school necessities that ended up in landfills.

Fast forward to Jessica's year as a freshman at Gothenburg High School.

Sitting in an FFA class one day, she learned that the organization wanted ideas, through a "go green" campaign, of how to help the environment.



Jessica presented her idea about recycling school supplies to FFA teacher Dan Scherer.

"I thought this would be a good project and it was something we could do to help the environment," she said.

Scherer suggested she write up a plan and present it to members in the FFA organization.

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They voted and agreed to try it.

First on Jessica's plan of action was to collect boxes to hold supplies. She and other FFA'ers painted recycle symbols on the boxes which were then placed in classrooms, kindergarten through 12th grade, near the end of the school year.

Through industrial arts teacher Ken Rigler, who lives in Callaway, FFA'ers learned that members of a Callaway church—United Methodist—would take the supplies to a school the church built in Bagarmi, Nigeria.

On Thursday, the last day of high school before summer break for high schoolers, volunteers carried more than 20 supply-filled boxes to an FFA classroom.

"I really didn't think we'd get this much," Schmidt said about the 305 pounds of school supplies they collected.

Abigail Cary, who helped with the project, described the project as a good one.

"It's not often kids our age get to help kids in other countries," Cary said.

Schmidt's brother, Roman Schmidt, said he thinks the supplies will make learning more fun for the Nigerian students.

"Especially if they didn't have anything to begin with," Jessica added.

Ken Pitkin of Callaway, who has helped with the school in Nigeria, confirmed Jessica's thought.

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“You can’t believe the impact this will have on the school,” Pitkin told the volunteers gathered. “Education is key to them.”

Pitkin said most of the children walk miles to school from the bush because of the value they place on education.

Three years ago, the Callaway church helped build five, temporary cornstalk buildings for school and pay three teachers.

The age range of the children who attend the school is from 3 to 15, Pitkin said, noting that students named the school the Callaway Nursery and Primary School.

Pitkin said the last time he visited, children lined the road and danced and sang a song about their Callaway school.

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