

St. Martha Social Justice Committee for 2015-2016

The Social Justice Committee (SJC) has had a very positive turnout this year! With interest from some younger students last year, the SJC was opened to include students from grades 5-8 for this school year. We have doubled in size from 15 students to over 30 and now have girls AND boys joining us on our journey for change.

On Tuesday, November 10th, approximately 30 students had the opportunity to participate in WE day in Ottawa. They were able to participate in listening to many messages about self-acceptance, anti-bullying, and being leaders of today. They were able to listen to many famous voices speak – Superwoman Youtube Blogger, Henry Winkler, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his wife Sophie. They have come back with energy and enthusiasm to bring positive change to the world around them in small and large capacities.

Our Year Ahead:

With so many students, and passions, it took some time to narrow down our focus for the year. Below you will find a breakdown of some of the initiatives the kids are working towards.

Local Charity – Local Homeless Shelters Advent Focus	Global Charity – United World Schools Lent Focus	Ongoing Throughout the School Year
<p>The students have named this campaign Operation Winter Warmth. They are collecting socks, toothbrushes, and travel toothpaste for the local homeless shelters. The goal: 500 items across the entire school.</p> <p>Socks are the #1 needed item in homeless shelters yet they are the least donated item. The SJC is looking for a mix of men’s, women’s and children’s socks.</p> <p>As well, the SJC is learning a new skill! The students have been learning to use looms to make scarves (from donated yarn) for those in need to leave around the city and as part of donations to various causes. Goal: a scarf for each member of the SJC to donate.</p>	<p>United World Schools is an organization from the UK that builds schools in the most remote areas of Cambodia, Myanmar, and China. Please see additional details below.</p> <p>Students would be focusing on collecting funds for our school in Kaung Whatt through a two day Talent Show Event (one evening focusing on a primary talent show and the next on a junior/intermediate talent show).</p>	<p>Collection of pop tabs that will be donated to a collection currently being held at another school in our board.</p> <p>Collection of expired batteries for zinc supplements overseas. Please see more information below.</p> <p>Mabel’s Labels ongoing yearly collection (To be determined).</p> <p>Awareness of Local and World issues through presentations and school announcements.</p>

Additional Information:

United World Schools

UWS is a UK based organization from the UK that builds schools in the most remote areas of Cambodia, Myanmar, and China. It functions by pairing Partnership Schools (like St. Martha) with Host Schools in the countries they work in. We have been paired with a middle/high school in the UK names Poynton High School (<http://www.phs.cheshire.sch.uk/>) and our funds will be merged with theirs to obtain the yearly maintenance cost of \$5000 USD that is needed to keep a host school functioning year to year. This includes fresh coats of termite paint (apparently they are extreme) and ongoing training of the teachers.

Our host school is in Myanmar. This was chosen by the SJC students for a few reasons. Through our Skype conversation with the school coordinator of UWS, the SJC learned that Myanmar has few schools compared to Cambodia (over 30) but has the chance at having the largest impact in the near future due to a recent progressive government change. Our school is called Kaung Whatt.

There are some great features about UWS and its connection with schools:

- 100% of our school funds raised goes to our Host School. UWS works with large companies through donations to offset the cost of running the organization so that school money is not being given to salaries or office costs. It all goes to the schools we are trying to help.
- If it were not for UWS these villages would not have the opportunity to have an education. They are in the most rural and dense jungle areas and even google maps has trouble finding them!
- We are provided with constant feedback on our Host School – videos, pictures, and written updates allow us to experience and watch our hard work play out in front of us. We are provided with global coordinates so that we are able to find our school.
- A lot of work goes into choosing schools for UWS – they meet with the villagers and the villages must promise to send ALL school age children (boys and girls) and not send them to work. Teachers are chosen and trained from the village people – either those with some education or those that just love to be around the children. (In Cambodia, the government now supplies an additional government trained teacher to all UWS schools). Villagers help to build the school in turn learning trade skills.

Expired Batteries and Zinc Health

Each year almost 450,000 children worldwide die from zinc deficiencies. Zinc Saves Lives is a partnership group with Call2Recycle businesses (there are dozens in Kingston alone!). For every AA battery that is recycled 6 children will receive the lifesaving zinc supplements they need. Students learned about this initiative at WE day and many begged to be able to collect expired batteries for this cause in the days following. Students have already begun calculating battery size to children helped ratios and prepping posters for the cause.

Thank you once again for being a strong supporter of the St. Martha Social Justice Committee!