

Heritage High School goes MAD; Builds and Equips Sister School in Africa

Few, if any other high school's across the nation can boast of the kind of work that Heritage High School has accomplished over the past three years, as the students' have rallied to first build, and then equip, their sister school in the West African country of **Sierra Leone**. Three years ago, Heritage students learned about the struggles of the people in this country, which is considered by several measures, the poorest nation in the world. The Heritage High School Community Relations Committee responded by creating the concept of **MAD (Making a Difference) Week** in an effort to make a difference in this war torn country. In 2007 and 2008, Heritage students raised over \$14,000 and \$17,000 respectively for a remote community in Sierra Leone near the town of Kabala. In the summer of 2008, the three Heritage students traveled to Sierra Leone to help clear the land and begin building **Heritage School of Kabala**.

This year, **MAD Week 2009**, was another amazing success. In one short week, despite a weak economy, **the Heritage community raised \$17,585.84** to equip its sister school with desks and to build a well that will provide clean, safe, accessible drinking water for students at the school and people of the surrounding community. And our fund raising amount continues to grow as additional funds come in. Two Heritage students will travel to this country again this summer to help paint the school and deliver the additional funds.

For MAD Week 2009, student's organized events to inform their classmates about the plight of the people of Sierra Leone and to encourage them to contribute. It was a school wide and community effort as students from a wide variety of clubs and activities jumped on board to help the students in Africa who will attend their sister school. The Fine Arts department donated over \$2200, raised through donations at the annual One Act Plays and at the Fine Arts Music Concert. The Epilogues, an emerging local band, played a benefit concert. The Shack restaurant hosted a MAD Week night. Two Heritage teachers volunteered to shave their heads for the cause, prompting students to donate almost \$2000.00 to see their teachers "cut their long locks." The Alpine club organized a sponsored hike. Finally, on Friday the seniors took on the staff in the annual student vs. staff basketball game, defeating the faculty for the second consecutive year in a tightly contested affair.

This year the students and staff emphasized education as well as fund raising. In an effort to inform the student body about related global issues, student groups created "educational hallways" throughout the building and attended presentations made by guest speakers. Guest Speakers included Ali Kamanda, a native of Sierra Leone who works closely with Operation Classroom, Lindsay Strine, one of our students who traveled to Sierra Leone last summer to begin building our sister school, Stasia Humphreys of the Dalit Freedom Network, who discussed the plight of this untouchable class in India, and Ved Nanda, a world renowned global activist who shared his work in international law. In classrooms, teachers connected with the MAD Week events in a variety of ways. In one class, students set on the floor to experience what it would be like to try to learn despite the lack of desks. Language Arts students read [A Long Way Gone](#) to get a look inside a boy soldier's life during the most brutal years of Sierra Leone's Civil War. Science teachers learned about key diseases of West Africa, how they spread and how they are combated. Heritage students made a difference in the lives of others but also this week has made an important difference in students' lives as well, as they gained a greater connection to another community half way around the ever shrinking globe.

It would be impossible to note all those whose efforts and generosity made this week such a huge success, but among the largest contributors were:

South Park Orthodontics donated \$1000.00.

The Shack Restaurant donated \$844.34.

Several individual Heritage High School families donated between \$100.00 and \$500.00.

The Epilogues Band benefit concert netted over \$350.00.

Numerous local businesses allowed put out collection jars at their registers, adding up to over \$300.00.

South Metro International Reading Association contributed \$300.00 for the purchase of books to support literacy at the new school.

The Heritage High School Alpine Club organized a sponsored climb, raising \$260.00.

Paul and Kendra Plath donated Rockies Baseball Tickets valued at \$170.00.

Kids and Family Dentistry donated \$100.00.

EduKit Vending Inc. donated candy sold as snacks at the concert and basketball game.

Heritage High School would like to thank the entire community for making MAD Week so successful. It is never too late to donate, as this will be an ongoing project. To contribute, make your donation to "Operation Classroom." All contributions are tax deductible. Send checks to Operation Classroom at Heritage High School; 1401 W. Geddes Ave.; Littleton, CO 80120.