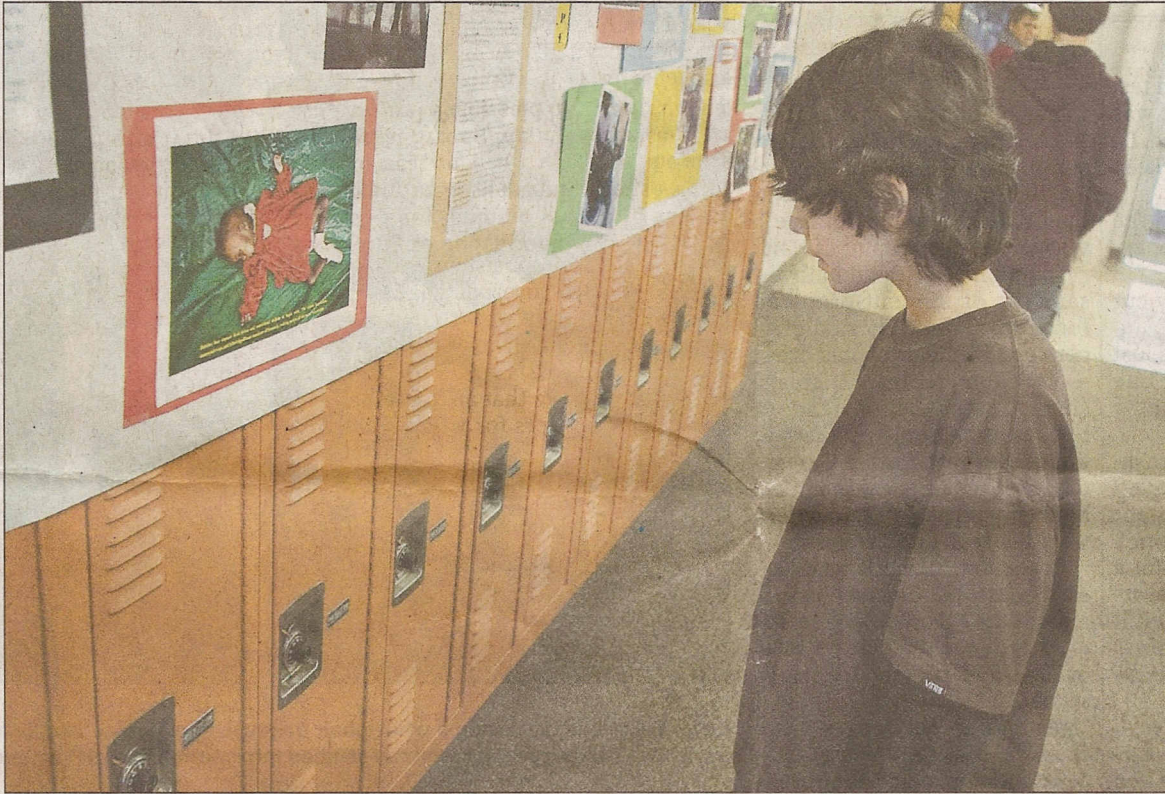


Middle school dedicates day to people of Haiti



WILL YURMAN staff photographer

A.J. Testa, 12, looks at a photo of a malnourished Haitian child as students at Barker Road Middle School walked the halls of the school on Tuesday, part of a day-long school project on Haiti.



WILL YURMAN staff photographer

Matt Twaits, 12, stops to taste coconut bread, a traditional Haitian food. Students walked for an hour to imitate the time it takes for many Haitians to get to school.

FOODS OF HAITI

RICE



MANGO



SORGHUM



Students send money and encouragement

NICOLE LEE

STAFF WRITER

Imagine how it feels to walk one hour to get to school. Imagine how it feels to not know when you will eat next. Remember to be thankful.

Visual reminders of the importance of being thankful reverberated from the walls of Barker Road Middle School on Tuesday through pictures of children from Haiti, some sucking their fingers, playing soccer or just standing still, smiling.

The country — whose infrastructure was already unsteady — was

Learn more

Get more information on the Hope for Haiti Foundation at www.hopeforhaitifoundation.com

ravaged this year by storms that destroyed homes and killed hundreds of residents.

Staff at Barker Road, in the Pittsford school district, devoted the entire day to educating 748 sixth-through eighth-graders about the culture, government, and struggles of Haiti, one of the poorest coun-

tries in the Western Hemisphere.

The project “is tied to Thanksgiving and we did that deliberately,” said Barker Road principal Michael Pero. “We don’t talk enough about humanity and giving to others as we need to.”

The project is a partnership with Hope for Haiti, a North Carolina-based nonprofit foundation providing medical aid and overseeing water, education and construction projects in the country.

HAITI, PAGE 4B

Haiti

FROM PAGE 3B

Through Hope for Haiti, Barker Road will send money, supplies and letters of encouragement to the 350 students at the Unified School in Zorange, a village in the mountains of Haiti.

In one Barker Road hallway, samples of student-prepared foods from the Haitian diet — corn pudding and coconut bread — sat on tables. Displays showed student designs of houses that could withstand floods. Seventh-grader Cassandra Elston, 12, designed her house on stilts so floodwaters wouldn't seep into the home.

Cassandra and her friend Kelsey Tedesco, 12, planned to walk around the school several times to experience the miles a child in Zorange travels to get to school.

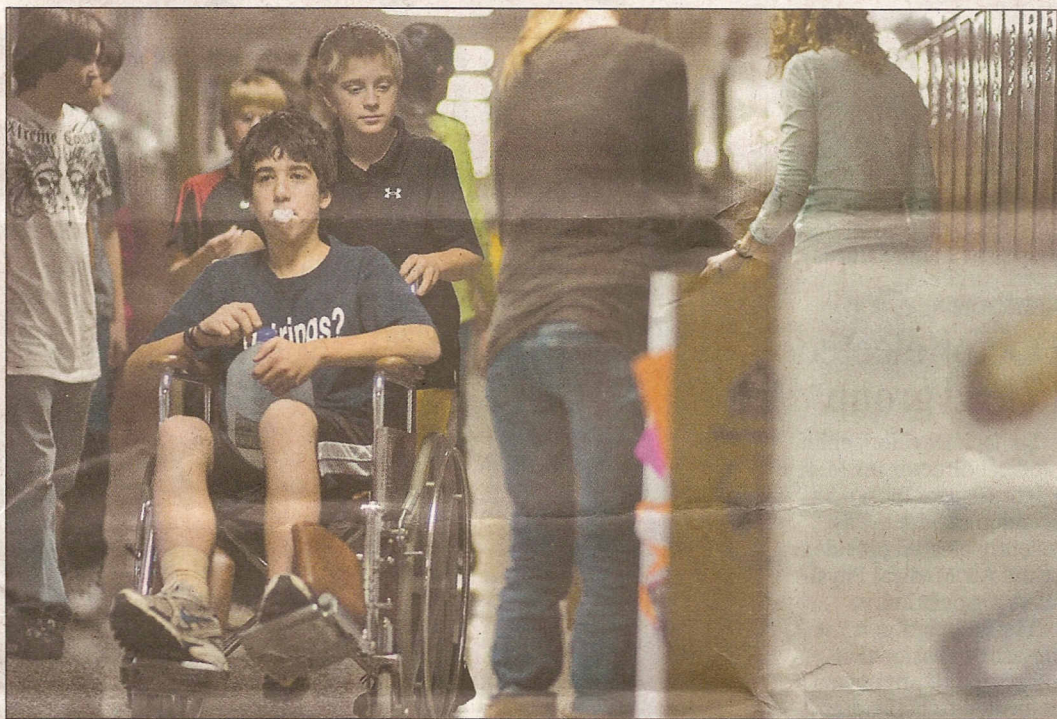
"And they don't even have shoes," Kelsey said. "I hope (students) start thinking about, like, what we have compared to what they have."

Josh Apo, 48, got his first pair of shoes at 15.

A Barker Road custodian, Apo was born in the city of Cap-Haitien and is the last of five siblings to survive.

He sends money home to his mother, Amancia, and follows her advice to be hard at work before sunrise.

Apo's childhood home had



WILL YURMAN staff photographer

Kevin Berardino, 12, using a wheelchair because of a sprained ankle, gets a push from his friend Dane Van Benthuisen, 12, as they studied information on Haiti around Barker Road school.

Online Extra

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two bedrooms, no electricity, and no indoor bathroom. His father farmed intermittently. The lack of food was commonplace.

"Sometimes we chewed on

sugar cane, or mango, or salt so as not to get sick," Apo said.

He left Haiti on a 12-by-12 boat cramped with 62 people, arriving in the United States in 1980.

Apo learned English and earned money through migrant work, construction and a nursing home job prior to coming to Barker Road.

"Thank God for everything, even the air you're breathing," he told students during a school

assembly Tuesday. "If you focus on good things, good things will always come to you."

Global awareness prepares students to ultimately make a difference in the world, said Micky Sanon, a Pittsford parent of twin eighth-graders at Barker Road, who viewed the project.

"They're getting immersed in something (that) hopefully opens up their eyes," she said. □

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