

Macville students want to 'Spread the Net'?

By Bill Rea

Some netting around the beds of children in Africa could keep mosquitoes away, and prevent those youngsters from getting malaria. To that end, students at Macville Public School have started a fundraising campaign in support of Plan Canada and Spread the Net. The effort was launched during a noon hour assembly at the school last week.

'We're about to start something that's never been done in a school in Caledon,' teacher Lorraine Lapp told the students. 'We're going to be spreading the word about Spread the Net.'

Spread the Net is a national school-to-school challenge to raise money for these bed nets. The word gets around through he likes of Rick Mercer on his weekly TV show.

Lapp told the students \$10 will buy one net that can keep two children safe from these disease-carrying mosquitoes for up to three years. She added it will be like a competition between schools all over the country.

Malaria was eradicated from this part of the world years ago, but it's still a problem in Africa and parts of Asia.

The school's support of Spread the Net was sparked by Grade 8 student Clark Elliott. He said he learned about it from watching the Mercer Report. 'I thought it was a cool idea,' he said.

Realizing how lucky Canadians are, he decided there's a responsibility to share the good fortune.

He also said if Macville raises enough, there's a possibility Mercer will visit the school.

The school had hoped to hear from retired teacher Cathy Pelletier, who had volunteered for a year in an orphanage in Tanzania, contracting malaria in the process. She was unable to attend, but her friend, Macville teacher Liz Gilchrist, was able to provide a few details, including how Pelletier got sick after being bitten by a mosquito. She recovered, and learned the importance of protecting people from the illness.

Gilchrist said she's been to Malawi and seen how the nets are tucked around the beds. She added these nets are treated with chemicals that discourage mosquitoes. As well, she said the nets have to be replaced every couple of years because they get old and the chemicals wear off.

'Hopefully, we can raise lots of money,' she said. 'The more we raise, the more bed nets we buy.'

Lapp said one child dies of malaria somewhere in the world roughly every minute, and most of them are younger than five. She added more than half the world's population is at risk of contracting the illness.

She also said the goal at the school is to raise \$2,500, or \$10 per student. The campaign will run until the third week of February.

There are a couple of fundraising events in the works for the coming weeks. They include a winter carnival, sports tournaments and other fun activities. One of them could see certain teachers getting a pie in the face.



Grade 8 student Clark Elliott (front) and members of the Student Parliament hold up one of the mosquito nets Macville students will be raising money to buy for children in Africa.