

Water Walk Challenge raises funds for new roofs in Uganda



By Brock Weir

You never really know someone until you walk a mile in their shoes, but students at Rick Hansen Public School hoped to become a little bit closer to that on Wednesday as they lugged buckets of water from home to school.

The Water Walk Challenge is the second of five challenges Grade 7s and 8s from the east Aurora elementary school have set for their fellow students as they raise money for the Tin Roof Global Water Challenge.

As The Auroran went to press this week, members of the Rick Hansen community were preparing to walk Mavrinnac Boulevard laden down with buckets of water to get a sense of what many children in Uganda have to go through each day to get the smallest amount of clean water ? often over harsh terrain and even more often barefoot.

As the elder students see each student arrive at school with their pails, they will hand out tokens and the students will then dump the water into the school garden. The number of tokens collected by each class will be exchanged for points, and then it will be onto the next challenge.

The Rick Hansen community launched their Tin Roof Global Water Challenge on Friday Morning with the ?Down the Hatch Challenge? where each member of Student Council, representing each home room had to stand in front of every student at the morning assembly and chug a water bottle full of a murky, chunky concoction whipped up to underscore what it feels like to have to drink dirty, contaminated water.

?We really want to get out the message that not everybody has access to clean water at home,? says student council member Sakina Chaudurey. ?We're showing kids pictures of their water sources and how it is basically a muddy puddle and some of them say, ?Why don't they just go to the sink? but they don't have the opportunity to do that. That is why we need to help them out.?

As Sakina got mentally in the zone to pour the muddy mixture down the hatch, she said her one thought at the moment was, ?I just don't want to throw up in front of our whole school.? But, in the end, the greater message made a potential projectile the furthest thing from her mind.

?I am looking forward to getting the kids excited,? she says. ?I like this challenge because it is a great kickoff for the whole initiative and I am just hoping they will be able to participate and get parents to donate on our website.?

And the kids were definitely excited. As the class reps took their place in front of the stage on Monday morning, they chanted

“Chug! Chug!” as Principal Steve Gardner was one of the first to finish off his bottle of the brew. Somewhere along the line he made the fateful mistake of revealing he had an aversion to milk so, naturally, that was one of the key ingredients. It was a move he regretted, but he plowed through.

“It was one of those things where it was pinch the nose and chug,” he said, after wiping the corners of his mouth. “It gives you a good idea of drinking something that probably isn't what you think it should be. The part that is absolutely amazing about [this initiative] is it is student-driven. It is an idea that started at the end of last year and just continued on this year. The students created it from making contact with Tin Roof Global to do workshops, educating each and every class, and coming up with our challenges.

“We opened our school with the mantra of making a difference, with Rick Hansen's thoughts on making a difference in people's lives every day and this is really a continuation of that. Social justice has really been a common theme through the entire school four years later, so this is really an extension of what our kids know and what they think is the right thing to do.”

Additional challenges include the “Lug a Bucket” Challenge during next week's phys-ed classes to represent how Ugandans have to walk long distances to get to water sources while underscoring the weight they have to carry on their way back, a “Plunge” challenge where student council members and Mr. Gardner and select staff and parents will be challenged to stand in buckets of ice water to mimic the discomfort of walking long distances in bare feet, and the “Water Conservation” challenge which will see water fountains turned off, tasking each class to get by on just one tank of drinking water through the day.

“Many students do this thing where when the water gets warm they just dump it out and get more, but we want to show them that water means something and you can't just dump it out anytime you want,” says Sakina. “Clean water is something everyone needs and it is a basic human right.”

To learn more about and to donate to the students' campaign, visit bit.ly/22ItUIm.