
The Lessons We Learn

June 22, 2010

So there's a girl (Naomi McLauchlan) sitting in a grade 9 classroom and she listens as her teacher (Michael Horgan) takes them through a series of lessons on Man's Inhumanity to Man. She listens as they study the horrific histories of Cambodia and Rwanda and Somalia, and she listens and thinks as they look for patterns and common threads, and as they compare and contrast the events. As a final assignment they were required to write and then give speeches and multimedia presentations to the grade 8 class on any part of the unit they chose.

So the girl and her partner (Janine Whitford) spoke to the grade 8 class about the plight of the Somali refugees from the Darfur region. They talked very specifically about the situation in the refugee camps in Chad, and about how the women in those camps face assault and unspeakable violence when they leave the refugee camps to gather firewood for cooking. At the end of the speech the girls challenged the grade 8's to join them in raising money to buy solar cookers for Darfuri refugees. The idea sprang from the research that they'd done for their speech. They knew the cookers were important to the very survival of these families because the women and girls were at greatest risk when they were out of the camp gathering firewood, and the cookers (which cook by harnessing the sun's rays) would enable them to stay within the confines of the camp where they'd be relatively safe.

So the next day the girl came to school (Lashburn High School) with a pile of paper hands (Helping Hands) to give to anyone who donated. Over the next 2 weeks or so they raised enough money from the school and the community to purchase 23 solar cooker kits, which also included new aluminum-free cooking pots, new cooking utensils, and a crate of garbage bags to protect the environment.

And that 'people helping people' message would be the end of the story, except that the umbrella organization buying and delivering the cookers and training people in their use is the Jewish World Watch, an American organization dedicated to the mandate that "they will 'never again' stand by observing acts of inhumanity ...but will instead take responsibility for mobilizing the community and for helping to care for the victims of inhuman abuses."

Which means that, in the end, Canadian kids from a mainly Christian background, raised money that enabled an American Jewish organization to help Somali Islamic families in Africa.

Which is kind of a lesson for the world isn't it?

