

Camera

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SCHOOL REPORT

Lending a library

Creekside students collect books to send to Kenyan orphans

By Yu Miao
For the Camera

Karina Rodriguez's backpack is heavy.

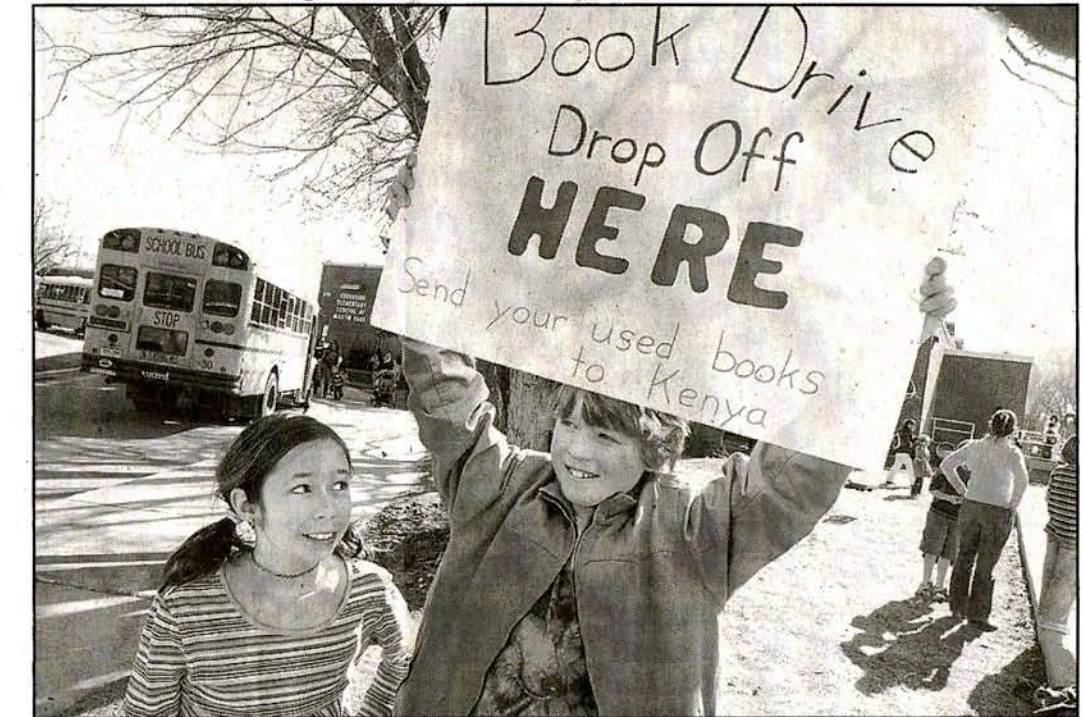
As a fifth-grader at Creekside Elementary, she came to school Thursday morning with not only her own textbooks, but also with books that will travel all the way to an orphanage in Kenya.

The school is working with Boulder's Global Education Fund to collect books for children who might otherwise never have a chance to own books.

New and gently used books are being collected at the IZZE book trailer Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays through March 20. The green trailer came to the school's parking lot at the beginning of this month. Within a week or so, half of the trailer has been filled up.

Karina donated three books that she read often: "Felicity's New Sister," "Fame School: Reach for the Stars" and "The Cat in the Hat."

Third-grader Quinn Davis brought in 19 books Thursday morning. They were so heavy that her mother had to help her carry them.



Paul Aiken | Camera

Richelle Streater looks on as Bruce Kreutzer tries to entice passers-by to drop off books at Creekside Elementary School on Friday afternoon. Both fifth-graders are involved in working to get books donated for Kenyan children.

"I really like reading, and I just think it's fair for them to have the same privilege being able to read the same books," Bruce Kreutzer, a fifth-grader, said of the Kenyan students.

Books collected at Creekside Elementary will be shipped to Shangilia Orphanage in Vihiga, western Kenya.

The book drive is part of a school partnership program established by the nonprofit Global Education Fund a year ago. Twenty schools and businesses in Boulder County and the Denver area have signed up for the program.

The IZZE book trailer stops at each location for around a month, then drives the books to Denver, where they are sorted, selected and shipped to different countries.

So far, around 100,000 books have been collected.

Boulder resident Eliza Woloson founded Global Education Fund in 1998. She said she had a friend who was working in an orphanage in Nicaragua at the time. One day, he contacted her and said they didn't have a single book for the children to read in the orphanage. Having been in the

book business for years, Woloson immediately called up some publishing companies and distributors for donations.

Within several months, donated books filled up a whole shed in her backyard. With help from families and friends, Woloson shipped the books to the orphanage.

Shortly after that, she went on a trip to visit the orphanage in Nicaragua. She saw how primitive the conditions were, and how thrilled the children felt to have their own books.

When she came back to the United States, she received e-

mails from different organizations in Latin America that had heard about what she had done, and wondered if she could help them, too.

In the past 10 years, the organization has built more than 60 libraries in some 20-plus countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa. It purchases textbooks, furnishes classrooms, and trains teachers. It has also set up a scholarship program in Kenya to help needy children, primarily young women with excellent academic performance, to attend high schools.

“Over the years, a lot of kids told me the significance books have on them,” Woloson said.

Liz Berry, program director of Global Education Fund, visited Kenya last summer. She saw the extreme needs in the country, and was touched by the desire Kenyan children have for education. When she placed books in the children’s hands, she said they “lit up and came alive.”

The organization is primarily collecting books for children ranging from age 7 to 17. Reference books, natural science and non-fiction books are particularly needed.

Creekside Elementary fifth-grader Renee Mieese’s father has also worked orphanages in Kenya, and told her children there are really eager to read.

“I think our little school is making a difference for them, and other schools should follow our examples,” she said.