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February 20, 2008

Project to send shoes to Nicaragua a learning experience

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Mark Gentili
Wednesday February 20, 2008

Back to main page — Christine Bergeron's Gr. 3 class at St. Patrick's School in Kapuskasing has undertaken a unique effort to help the less fortunate in Nicaragua. Taking an idea from her sister – a teacher at Holy Saviour School in Marathon – Ms Bergeron and her class have been collecting men's, women's and children's shoes as part of a program through the Nipigon Rotary Club. Clothes, school supplies and food are common items collected by groups in the prosperous West for the poor in developing countries; shoes, not so much. But there is a very good reason to go with footwear, Ms Bergeron explained. "Many of the children and adults who live in the poorest rural areas of Nicaragua are vulnerable to diseases carried by parasites that live in the soil," she said. "Walking barefoot in open-toed shoes significantly increases the degree of parasitic disease in the population."

From Marathon, Nipigon Rotary will ship the shoes to its partner in Nicaragua, humanitarian service organization the Rainbow Network, for distribution. The local Gr. 3 class will ship its shoes to Marathon to make the journey. "To date we have collected 64 pairs of shoes!" Ms Bergeron said. The class will continue to collect footwear until the March Break. The teacher also said the effort has been a great learning experience, both for the heart (fitting in as it does with St. Patrick's "sharing the light" theme, she explained) and the head – the students used their shoe collection data to build a bar graph.

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