

Shepardson club event targets poverty

BY HALLIE WOODS • HALLIEWOODS@COLORADOAN.COM • DECEMBER 3, 2008

Though young and seemingly small, students at Shepardson Elementary School have teamed up to help battle the world's big problems.

O Ambassadors, a club of 38 students in first through sixth grade, will host a community event Thursday to help combat children living in poverty across the United States and around the world.

"We wanted to help locally, nationally and globally," said Shana Bode, the club's coordinator.

O Ambassadors is derived from Oprah's Angel Network and Free the Children and is designed to help children learn about global issues and then raise awareness elsewhere. The club started in January 2007, and members have already completed a number of projects including raising \$5,000 to purchase a well for a Latin American village.

The club focuses on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals that work to combat issues related to poverty, education, health and sustainable development.

"I joined O Ambassadors because I didn't know that much about the world," said Jayson Deakins, 10, a fourth-grade student at Shepardson. "I didn't know that children that young can help. When O Ambassadors came up, I thought it was a great way I could help."

Almost 1 billion people live on less than \$1 each day, according to the United Nations. Worldwide, 2 billion children are living in poverty, according to UNICEF.

Bode said she has already seen a difference in the thinking of her young club members.

"I think it helps them think critically about the world and expands their life experience beyond Fort Collins," Bode said. "They are never too young to make a difference."

Thursday night's event, called Shepardson Gives, will raise awareness and money for several local and global charities including Free the Children, an organization that encourages children to help other children through education, and Poudre School District's McKinney Homeless Education Program.

"I hope that people who will come will know what they're doing and feel good about it," said Evan Bode, 10, a fifth-grader.

Elia Betschen, 9, a fourth-grader, said it was hard to think about those living in poverty where running water is a luxury.

"I would be kind of sad, but I would be kind of happy to know people in other countries or in O Ambassadors are trying to help me," she said.



Shepardson Elementary School third-graders Tyhan Teaman and Chae Hyun Lee, right, raise their hands during an origami lesson at an O Ambassador's Club meeting Monday with ESL teacher Sue Harbour, left, at the school in Fort Collins. (Michael G. Seamans/The Coloradoan)

WHAT TO GO?

- > **What:** Shepardson Gives
- > **Where:** Shepardson Elementary, 1501 Springwood Drive
- > **When:** 6-7:30 p.m. Thursday
- > Shepardson Gives will include family games, refreshments, balloon animals and music. Each family is encouraged to bring at least one nonperishable store-bought snack, which will be donated to Poudre School District's McKinney Homeless Education Program and tucked inside the backpacks of PSD students. Families who want to bring more than snacks may donate \$2 in cash or a gently used or new book for students in kindergarten through 12th grade.