

Preschoolers provide clean water in Dominican Republic

June 20, 2013

DALLAS—Preschoolers at [Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas](#) learned an important lesson this year: Nobody is too young to make a difference.



Joan Hammons (left), minister to preschoolers at Wilshire Baptist Church, and Mary Browder, director of the church's Early Childhood Learning Center, display cards created by preschoolers. Proceeds from sale of the cards went to a water purification project in the Dominican Republic. "In preschool Sunday school, we talk about God loves you, God made you, we love you—it's all about you. But preschoolers need to hear that God loves somebody else, too," Minister to Preschoolers Joan Hammons said. "Missions is that other element that brings that balance."

The children in the church's preschool Sunday school classes joined the children in Wilshire's Early Childhood Learning Center—the church's weekday program for preschoolers—to raise \$3,516 to help with water purification efforts in the Dominican Republic.

When the money the children raised was combined with funds raised by two other groups, the total equaled the exact amount needed to purchase a water purification system, said Kayla Villnow, director of community investments for [Esperanza International](#).

The system will be installed in a church in the Santo Domingo area, the capital of the Dominican Republic and home to more than 3 million people. The project will provide clean water for up to 700 families per day.



Virginia DeMent helps her family sell lemonade to neighbors and friends. All proceeds from their family lemonade stand went toward purchase of a water purification system in the Dominican Republic. Since Wilshire Baptist Church has a long history of missions involvement in the Dominican Republic, the project was a natural progression of those efforts and a good starting point for the children, Hammons said.

Children in both the Sunday school classes and the weekday program created artwork for cards bought by family members. A dozen cards sold for \$10. The inside of the cards was blank, making them appropriate for a variety of occasions. The back of the cards mentioned the water purification project.

While card sales provided the bulk of the funds raised, a game night in January also yielded some donations, and a few families created personal projects like a lemonade stand to garner additional funds.

The children learned about the Dominican Republic throughout the year and saw the difference a water purification system could make.

“What I loved was having the kids pour in dirty water and it coming out clean and their being able to drink it. Just being able to say to them: “There are people who live in other countries who do not have clean drinking water, and that affects their health. You get up in the morning and feel good and go to school. They don’t; they’re sick. This can help them stay well,” Hammons said.



The water purification project will provide clean water daily for up to 700 families like these in the Dominican Republic. “That’s the neatest thing—for our preschoolers to think, ‘I can make a difference.’ I’m not telling you every preschooler has grasped all that, but there are some who have, even to the point that we have some of our preschoolers telling their moms, ‘Let’s make sure our water’s clean,’ because they have learned dirty water can make you sick.”

Empowering these children at an early age should bode well for the future, she believes.

“It lays a great foundation for them to understand that there is something even they can do at this age to help somebody else. And as they get bigger, they realize there is even more they can do to help somebody else,” Hammons said.

The children also learned about cooperation through the experience.

“All along, we’re working in partnership with one another and then with the other groups who our money was combined with. They were seeing that when we work together, we can accomplish a lot,” Hammons said. “This is just a great way to teach preschoolers the things they need to be taught when they come to church.

“I love what a difference it has made in their lives. For preschoolers to start their lives knowing, ‘I can do something to change this world.’ To me, that’s huge. Even though they are not old enough to go, they are old enough to make a difference.”