

Sewing kits are on their way to Uganda

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Erika Van Oyen, a local teacher, left in early July for Uganda where she will be volunteering through ISEE Solutions, a grassroots society that focuses on projects in Uganda. Erika, the founder of ISEE Solutions, and her husband will be volunteering in Uganda for the next 13 months. ISEE Solutions (www.iseesolutions.org) stands for Sustainability, Education and Empowerment. On January 04, 2013, Erika spoke to the members of the Rotary Club of Kelowna Sunrise about her goals for the next year while in Uganda, which prompted the club to support her endeavours with a donation of \$500.



Club member Linda Frandsen became associated with Erika because of the club's involvement in Uganda and quickly became involved in supporting one of her projects in Uganda. The project will involve the production of washable and re-usable napkins and underwear which will be distributed to girls to enable them to continue to attend school during their menstrual cycles. With this objective in mind, a group of volunteers, including Linda, carried out two sewing parties and then spent many hours at home sewing to produce almost 600 kits from donated fabric for Erika's project in Uganda.





According to Erika's blog at the time of her departure from Kelowna for Uganda, three sewing machines were packed and ready to depart for Uganda to enable volunteers there to finish the thousand or so sanitary pads that the Society has committed to sewing. Erika writes in the blog prior to her leaving that "Four Olympic sized duffle bags, one rolling suitcase and four smaller duffle bags sit in a pile waiting to be packed with thousands of pads, liners, facecloths and drawstring bags that a group of amazing volunteers have sewn for ISEE."

In the message to the club Rotarians, Erika pointed out that approximately 80% of the girls drop out of school most often because they are starting to experience menstrual cycles. Since they don't have sanitary supplies, they choose to stay home for fear of ridicule, loss of dignity, discomfort and uncleanliness.

The Society also provides girls with education focused on hygiene and other health aspects at the time that they receive the kits, offers professional development for teachers, equips schools with hard-to-find teaching materials, implements skills and trades training for youth, partners with orphanages and youth organizations to develop food sustainability programs, and teaches young women about reproductive health.