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NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Sixth grade reading class inspires student to raise funds for Uganda

The work of a local student is changing the lives of families more than 7000 miles away.

Craig "Tre'" Smith, a sixth-grader at Oak View Middle School, recently raised more than \$1,500 in two weeks for Ekisinga Ministries, an organization which strives to bring clean water to every person in Uganda.

Tre' was inspired after a reading class led by his teacher, Lori Barber, in which she previewed the book *A Long Walk to Water*. The book is based on a true story in which a Sudanese 'Lost Boy' returns home and installs deep-water wells in remote villages in dire need of clean water. (Lost Boys are children who were orphaned or displaced by civil war in southern Sudan in the 1980s.)

That evening, Tre' sat at the dinner table with his family and talked of his hope of helping African countries with their clean water supply.

Tre's mom, Deanna Smith, saw how passionate Tre' was about this opportunity and wanted to help.

"Tre' started talking to us about this and very passionately stated that we needed to go buy as many filtered straws as possible and send them to Africa," Smith said. "My husband, Craig, and I dug a little deeper with him. He was heartbroken to know that children would drink dirty water because they were thirsty, then get sick. He wanted to buy all the filters and send a care package."

After a night of discussion and research, Tre' and his family thought it would be more fitting to find an organization on the ground in Africa to send money to so they could obtain more supplies for clean water.

Smith then reached out to the mother of one of Tre's former classmates who is heavily involved with Uganda and Ugandans in need. From there, Smith was put in touch with Ekisinga Ministries, which provided details of how donations would be spent.

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At \$1,000, medi-drops are given to villagers who have to travel to obtain any water. In these, a silver ion bar is placed in buckets of water and in eight hours, the water becomes clean for drinking.

At \$1,500, a water kiosk can be set up in the middle of a city or neighborhood. One side of the kiosk would have unfiltered water for laundry and bathing while the other side contains clean drinking water. A kiosk can fill a five-gallon jug in about a minute and helps around 300-350 people with sustainability for several years.

Following conversations with Ekisinga Ministries, Tre' set a goal of raising \$2,500 in hopes of helping 100 families.

One night after that conversation at the dinner table, Smith posted a flyer on social media looking for donations to Tre's cause. Less than 72 hours later, the Smith family had already raised \$1,000 and sent the funds to Ekisinga Ministries.

That money funded 40 medi-drops and canisters, which benefitted about 200 people in Uganda.

The other \$1,500 donation will go towards a water kiosk for a neighborhood in Uganda.

As of Monday, less than two weeks from the start of Tre's fundraiser, the Smith's have raised \$1,615 of the \$2,500 goal.

Barber, Tre's reading teacher, was overwhelmed when she heard about the fundraiser.

"I was overwhelmed with love and happiness," Barber said. "I am so proud of Tre'."

As Tre's fundraiser continues, Smith has been accepting donations via cash or Venmo.

Anyone who would like to donate directly to Tre's cause can do so through Venmo to his mother's account ([@DeannaSmith4616](#)). She has sent all cash and Venmo donations to Ekisinga Ministries.

People can also donate directly to Ekisinga Ministries and note "Tre' Smith" in the comment section below the donation amount at [Ekisinga's donation page](#).

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