



SPECIAL TO THE DAILY

From left to right are Red Sandstone Elementary School students Kalia Caradonna, Natalie Vance and Abraham Dauphinais.

Art students inspire hope

Red Sandstone Elementary School students connect with kids in Africa

Daily staff report

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VAIL — When Red Sandstone Elementary School students think of Africa, they think of wild animals, peace, deserts, bright colors and different cultures.

Under the direction of teachers Deb Bolon-Feeney, Becky Highter and Donna King, fourth- and fifth-grade students are taking a global approach to their artwork this school year. The elementary school in Vail has chosen to partner with Children Inspiring Hope, a nonprofit educational and charitable organization created in 2008 to enhance curriculum and connect children through a cross-cultural exchange of creative projects between children in North America and Africa.

"The idea of this whole project is for students to express from their hearts creatively and inspire others to do good in the world," said Amy Gaylor, president and founder of Children Inspiring Hope.

With more than 2,000 children in the U.S., Canada and Ghana involved in the program, students are encouraged to create messages and projects that share their desires for peace and friendship in the world.

Projects range from paintings, poems, songs and recycled art to friendship flags, letters, murals and books about the students and their communities. Still and motion film are then used to show the children in America and Africa making, participating in and receiving these projects.

Bolon-Feeney, an art teacher, said she is very impressed with the programs that con-

nect children of different cultures together through their artwork.

"I am very excited to begin creating our artwork to send to students in Ghana," Bolon-Feeney said. "Now that we all have a better idea of what our mission is, we will begin to brainstorm with the students on the most effective way to communicate our message to our new friends in Ghana. The theme for our artwork exchange is one of peace and friendship, with a more specific message of, 'What is our role as stewards of the planet?' and 'How do we see ourselves caring for the Earth?'"

Red Sandstone students and staff will decide on what medium to use to express their ideas. Keeping in mind that students in Ghana will be mirroring their process with limited access to materials and tools overseas, products will need to be simple. To that end, Red Sandstone will send along a variety of art supplies for the students in Ghana to use as they would like.

In three to five weeks, Gaylor and four other volunteers will travel to Ghana with the art she has collected from students in the U.S. and Canada. Since she is only able to carry two bags of artwork that must not exceed a weight of 50 pounds each, Gaylor encourages students to carefully consider the artwork they wish to create.

Gaylor said the true strengths of these programs are when she travels to Ghana and places their projects in the hands of children and vice versa.

"These children have been empowered as global citizens to make a difference in the world by sharing in their hopes and dreams through creative artwork," she said.

In addition to the Children Inspiring Hope initiative, students in Tom Treat's class have been writing to other students for several months now in Togo, a country located just east of Ghana.

For more information on Children Inspiring Hope, go to www.childreninspiringhope.org.