

“The Journey” A message from Vicki

March 25, 2008

And they're off! Five hundred backpacks filled with school supplies have begun their amazing journey to reach students in need in Kosovo. In a few weeks I will hopefully once again smile in amazement, as I have many times, when I see that they have arrived safely in a foreign port. No kidding, I get giddy when I think of what it takes to get those “vessels of hope”, symbols of learning for students everywhere, from here to there! This time 500 wonderful children's books donated from local school libraries and generous children were also shipped.

The journey began with caring students donating or purchasing backpacks and supplies. This shipment is being delivered because of the generous efforts of students at William Orenic School, Troy Craughwell School, James Ward School and Whitney Young High School. They deserve a shout out for saying “yes” when asking to participate! Next the backpacks were cleaned, filled, & boxed for shipping by sixteen dedicated volunteers, students and adults, from Volunteer Aspire. Inspire that answered the call.

They were then trucked from Joliet to a freight company in Chicago. First stop for them was Luxembourg. They changed cargo planes and then headed to Ljubljana, Slovenia. Finally they will arrive in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo. There is no freight route in for us to directly fly there. DHL can but would cost us at least 5 times more.

Then will come the dance...ah the dance! I have done it all over the world. Customs agents, paperwork galore, some tiny airport... I have never paid customs on charitable goods anywhere & never will. Ah but the dance...many languages...many gestures...and then I just wait for the beautiful stamp on our documents that says “Clear/Duty free.”

The best however is yet to come! I leave on April 8 for a two week stay in Kosovo. While there I will visit 5 schools to distribute 500 backpacks to some of their neediest students. I will also do lessons at each school on “What will you do to change the world?” This lesson is one of the most beautiful I have ever taught and I've shared it everywhere I go.

With airplane fuel through the roof and the staggering decline in the dollar against the Euro we have no doubt that our cost will be over our usual \$5.00 per pack for shipping. We know you agree that it's well worth it. What those “vessels of hope” bring to the students that receive them is truly priceless.

Please know that none of this would be possible without your generosity. We are grateful for your participation in Volunteer Aspire. Inspire. Your response to our annual appeal helps us raise the much needed funds to pay for our shipping costs. Hours and dollars...we couldn't do it without you! Thank you...thank you...thank you... for helping us change the world, one backpack...one child...at a time!

Vicki Perella
Director/Teacher at Large