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Dakotas.  
Submitted photo

York High shoe drive to benefit children in Africa

By ED MCMENAMIN  
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ELMHURST — This year, used shoes collected by the York Community High School Key Club will benefit not only children in Africa, but also students on cold Sioux Indian reservations in the Dakotas.

A gift as simple as shoes can make a huge difference in the lives of children in impoverished regions, said Soles for Kids Co-chair Kelsey Mills, a junior at York Community High School.

“It’s basically essential,” she said. “They don’t have shoes. I know the kids in Africa walk 5 miles in the desert to school. They get infections, they get bitten.”

Last year, the group collected nearly 2,000 pairs of sneakers and sandals for African children.

Now that the drive accepts winter boots for donation to the Sioux reservation, Mills and co-chair Anna Talamo hope they can break that record.

“I know a lot of my friends

get new shoes constantly, so they donate a lot of their shoes,” she said. “It’s something very simple that everyone can do. It’s very easy, and it helps a great cause, too.

“And it keeps shoes out of landfills.”

Residents can drop off shoes at York Community High School, Churchville and Bryan middle schools, and Hawthorne, Emerson and Jackson elementary schools.

The drive began in December and ends April 25.

This weekend, the Elmhurst

YMCA is also collecting shoes. Southtown Hot Dogs, 103 E Vallette St., is also collecting shoes, and will give any donor a free ice cream cone, Mills said.

Elmhurst’s Kiwanis Club, Key Club’s parent organization, sponsors the drive and arranged for Mills and Talamo to attend the Kiwanis International Convention in Vancouver this June. The two York juniors will tell other clubs about the shoe program and how they can start similar drives of their own.

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