

Rutland's MSJ students gather up 'Soles4Souls'

The shoes were piling up in the lobby of Rutland's Mount St. Joseph Academy during Catholic Schools Week.

Scores of them. Sneakers and sandals. Flip-flops and rain boots. Clogs, flats, hiking boots. There was footwear for men and women, boys and girls.

Some new, some gently worn, the shoes were donated by members of the Catholic high school community for a program called Soles4Souls, and they were bound for Haiti.

Soles4Souls is a charity based in Nashville, Tenn. that distributes donated shoes free of charge to people in need. Since 2005, it has given more than 5.5 million pairs of new and gently worn shoes (currently donating one pair every nine seconds) to people in more than 125 countries, including Kenya, Thailand, Nepal, the United States and Haiti.

An earthquake devastated the island nation of Haiti in January, and the Mount St. Joseph community used Catholic Schools Week in February to raise awareness about the situation there and to do something to help survivors rebuild their lives in the aftermath.

The focus for the 2010 Catholic Schools Week at MSJ was on the current situation in Haiti, said Principal Paolo Zancanaro. "Part of the mission of MSJ is to create a just world. Motivated by the Gospel and the mission of our school, we are

called to educate ourselves about circumstances in our world and to respond to them creatively."

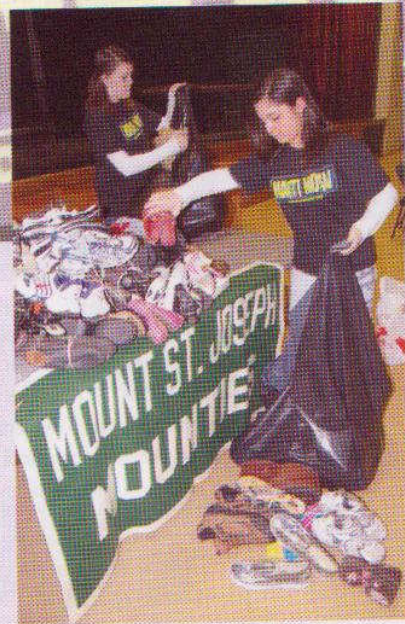
The Haiti Now! Week was sponsored by the school's Social Justice Club and included the collection of shoes—which broadened throughout the month and included collection sites in the Diamond Run Mall and Christ the King School—as well as videos on the situation in Haiti and a Haiti-related assembly.



Sophomore Natalie Hajj (left to right), freshman Chloe Elnicki and junior Briana Patten sort shoes for Mount St. Joseph Academy's "Haiti Now" project.

Students also raised about \$200 for relief in Haiti by paying to wear hats, jeans, sweats or shorts. The club members will decide on a charity to receive the funds to be used in Haiti.

People in Haiti "need help, and we are trying to do our part to help them," said Briana Patten, a junior and member of the Social Justice Club. "If everyone had the attitude that someone else will take care of it,



Chloe Elnicki (left) and Natalie Hajj sort shoes to be donated to earthquake victims in Haiti.

nothing would get accomplished in the world. If everyone helps out, we can help Haiti to get back to where it was" before the earthquake.

The MSJ Haiti Now! Week included special black T-shirts with the Haiti Now! logo. Students, faculty and staff wore them throughout the week.

"I'm proud to wear it," said sophomore Chloe Elnicki, a member of the Social Justice Club. "I'm proud to say I am part of this group. I'm helping."

"Even teens can help (with the relief effort), not just celebrities," said Natalie Hajj, a sophomore and member of the Social Justice Club.

"We can all make a difference," Briana added, commenting that whatever cause MSJ students undertake, the community supports them.

So when the newly formed Social Justice Club decided to put its effort into helping with Haitian relief, the school and wider community got involved.

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