

Helping Girls in Africa?!

By Radha Selvester, Community Outreach/Safe Place Specialist for CDS Family & Behavioral Health Services

When Santa Fe High School senior Joni Perkins received her “Keeper of the Dream” award on Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday a few weeks ago, she gave a powerful speech about one of Dr. King’s famous quotes. “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Joni gave many examples of domestic and international injustices. What she didn’t elaborate on in her speech is her involvement in “Mission Possible: Keep Girls in School. Period.”

“Mission Possible: Keep Girls in School. Period. “ was started in 2013 by Girl Scout Troop 733 in Alachua to help girls in Africa be able to attend school even after puberty. When they learned that 1/10 adolescent girls misses a week of school each month – which leads to girls dropping out of school, marrying young, and potentially dying in childbirth, they were moved to take action to change this. Joni is the current president of Troop 733, which produced 200 Days for Girls International Hygiene Kits last year for their peers in Africa.

Joni believes the injustice of girls being denied an education simply because their bodies are doing what they are supposed to do is a threat to justice everywhere. How can there be a system in place that makes it almost impossible for half of a society’s children to obtain an education? When girls have to search for bits of old clothing or mattress or use leaves or grass, they feel too uncomfortable to attend school. A society that excludes the potential of half its population loses out on possible solutions to their problems.

After receiving her kit, one of the girls in Kenya wrote in her thank-you letter, “I want to become a surgeon and help people like you are doing.” Imagine if that young lady grows up to find the cure for cancer? And it was your child’s life she saved? What if she was denied that opportunity because she had no feminine hygiene products to be able to attend school?

Dr. King – and Joni – are right. We need to work towards a just society for everyone’s benefit.

To help Joni and the rest of Troop 733 at their next Sewathon, please contact her troop leader: Radha Selvester 352 316 6113 radhas428@gmail.com. It will be held on March 21, 11 am – 6 pm, at the Santa Fe College Perry Center in Alachua (14180 NW 119th Terrace).

If your teens are not achieving their potential due to acting out behavior, running away, cutting school, etc. please contact CDS Family & Behavioral Health Services. CDS offers Family Action Counseling (age 6-17) and Interface Youth Program (residential program age 10-17) at no charge to participants. Please call 352 244 0628 x3822 (weekdays) or 352 244 0618 (24/7). www.cdsfl.org



Joni Perkins, President, Girl Scout Troop 733



First Lady of Tharaka Nithi, Kenya, Lucy Ragwa Mbae gives Days for Girls International Hygiene Kits made by Girl Scout Troop 733 to students to help them get an education