

# Students snip denim to make shoes

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CLINTON — Following in the footsteps of the Sisters of St. Francis, a group of Bluff Elementary School students is preparing to hold a Sole Hope shoe-cutting party to benefit those suffering from a parasitic insect in sub-tropical climates.

Sole Hope is an organization that provides homemade shoes to combat the effects of the sand flea or “jigger,” which is rampant in sub-Saharan Africa and South America. The insect enters through the foot of shoeless individuals in those areas. But using denim from donated pairs of jeans, Bluff Elementary students will cut patterns on March 23 that will eventually become pairs of shoes for those who live in affected areas.

The school’s Diversity Club, with about 20 fourth- and fifth-graders, will participate. With pairs of jeans donated to the Clinton First United Methodist Church, the kids will have the chance to make an impact on someone on the other side of the globe.

“Right now, it looks like we’re well on our way to being able to provide more than 200 pairs of shoes,” event organizer and Bluff counselor Lavina Engle said. “The students watched a video associated with Sole Hope and they couldn’t imagine not having a pair of shoes to wear all the time. The fact that they could help other kids just like them, that’s an idea that the students really attached to.”

Along with providing the students the opportunity to help children in other areas of the world, the project was chosen because it is a very hands-on experience. Actually tracing and cutting out the patterns that will be used to create the shoes will let students see their efforts paying off in real time.

“They’ll be able to see the fruits of their labor,” Engle said.

The Sisters of St. Francis, who held their own shoe-cutting party in September, will assist the Bluff students with their version on March 23. From Clinton, the cloth patterns will make their way to North Carolina, then to Uganda, where they’ll immediately have an impact.

As the party approaches, the anticipation and excitement for the service project is building.

“The kids loved this option because it allows them to show that they’re accepting and ready to help all people, no matter where they may be,” Engle said. “Not having a pair of shoes in these places prevents some children from being able to live a healthy life in some cases. So this isn’t just doing something to help, it’s helping kids just like our Bluff students.”

