

No Ordinary Teens

It is a late September evening, and I have just pulled up to the home of Kip and Harrison Hart, two Towson (Md.) High School students who are, at first sight, just normal teenage boys about to begin a night of dinner and homework.

When I walk in the door, they stand and shake my hand, and we walk past a kitchen table that is covered with Calculus books. We start talking outside on the deck, and that is when I realize that Kip, 16, and Harrison, 14, are anything but ordinary teenagers.

In 2007, the two brothers founded the South African Lacrosse Project to work in conjunction with the Waterberg Welfare Society, an organization that is dedicated to improving the lives of those infected with HIV and AIDS in South Africa.

Their project took shape after a former au pair had invited them to visit and asked them if they would consider playing soccer with the children at the Waterberg Welfare Society. Kip and Harrison decided they would bring lacrosse to the children instead.

They enlisted the support of some local sports stores and were able to bring 130 sticks and balls to the children. They taught a one-week lacrosse camp.

This year, through the continued generosity of

Sports Her Way, the boys were able to bring goals to the children as well. In addition, they have received contributions that have allowed for the construction of a lacrosse hut, built at the Waterberg Welfare Society, to store the equipment.

Along with the lacrosse project, there is also the Waterberg Literacy Project, which was established to provide educational opportunities to the children within the Waterberg. The schools, though public, carry a cost for books and uniforms. The tuition is \$7 for elementary school students, \$50 for middle school students and \$100 for high school students.

Or, to put it another way, the price we pay for a mouthguard, a sweatshirt or a new helmet can provide a full year of education for a child.

As I sit and listen to the two boys talk about their project, I am both impressed by their initiative and overwhelmed by their determination to provide for others.

Melissa Coyne



Kip, a high school senior hoping to major in aerospace engineering in college, has a business model, spreadsheets, runs the Web site and is focused on the details of how he can take this program to the next level.

He hopes to get a professional lacrosse team to travel to the area to teach the kids on a higher level and to eventually take the game to other areas of South Africa.

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Harrison, a freshman, hopes to see contributions increase to the point where they can provide full equipment for the boys and chalk to line the fields.

Currently, the male students play by girls' rules as there is no money for helmets and pads. The goalies play without protection. The fields are lined with flour. Both boys agree that the school is

full of exceptional athletic talent and that, given the right equipment and proper coaching, South Africa could become a hotbed for lacrosse in the future.

I asked the boys what and who inspired them to take on such a project, and each has a different role model.

For Kip, there is Mary Stevenson, the director of the Waterberg Welfare Society. Kip admires Mary's courage and determination and organizational skills. He says she never gives up on a project and that he won't either.

For Harrison, there is his mother, Barbara Cox. Harrison says she has spent her life working with children and with organizations dedicated to helping children with needs. He knows that he learned his compassion from her and hopes to one day give back as much as she has.

Both boys agree that the children at the Waterberg are themselves the most inspiring. Kip explains that every effort and every minute of time that they give to the children is appreciated on a level they cannot explain. The children are excited and smiling and

eager, and they treat each new task as a gift.

For Kip and Harrison, it has become a truly humbling experience.

As Kip puts it, "We expected to go there and have an impact on them, but what happened was the reverse. They had the bigger impact on us."

For more information, you may visit www.southafricanlacrosse.com. **LM**