



NATHAN VICK has begun a drive to collect 5,000 books for a school library in Mozambique, Africa. "I tend to think big," he said. The service project will help Nathan earn his Eagle Scout Award. He has already earned 25 merit badges and attended this year's Boy Scouts of America National Jamboree in Washington, D.C. "I'm hoping to attend a World Jamboree sometime," said Nathan, 13. (Photo by Bob Vlach)

Boy Scout needs book donations for school library in Africa

By **BOB VLACH**
WOODFORD SUN STAFF

Nathan Vick, who started reading when he was 3, cannot imagine his life without books and libraries. He especially enjoys reading about significant historical events like World War II, and how one person can change history.

So when a friend's mom, Susan D'Souza, told Nathan about the desperate need for English-language books to fill a school library being started in Mozambique, Africa, the 13-year-old Boy Scout began a drive to collect 5,000 donated books.

"It was pretty much natural that I should choose this as my (Eagle Scout) project," said Nathan, who earned his merit badge for reading by volunteering at the Woodford County Library.

Nathan's Eagle Scout project supports an effort to open a high-caliber school for children in Mozambique, according to D'Souza. She said the new school will serve American students whose families are doing missionary work, children whose families are from other countries and Mozambique children.

The new private school will serve 400 to 500 students within a few years, according to D'Souza. She said the school that it will

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replace only serves a handful of American students whose parents are doing missionary work in Mozambique.

"In order to get accreditation, they need to have a library," D'Souza said.

Andrew Cunningham, a Zimbabwean farmer who moved to Mozambique after civil unrest in his country, has been supported in his efforts to start the new school by partners New Tribes Mission, Eggs for Africa and New Horizons.

"The aim is for (this new school) to be a top-tier school," said D'Souza. "So that when (these students) graduate ... they'll be able to be accepted to any major educational institution whether it's Oxford or Harvard..."

Mozambique has come a long way since D'Souza and her family traveled to the former Portuguese colony on a mission trip a decade ago. A civil war tore the country apart, but its people are working really hard "to rebuild themselves as a nation," said Tamarin Vick, Nathan's mom.

Learning to speak English will provide a critical link for

a young generation in Mozambique as they try to strengthen their country's economy by improving trade relations, D'Souza said.

"They have to speak English," she said, "otherwise they're shut out" of the regional and global economic communities.

"When we were in Mozambique ten years ago," said D'Souza, "the local library had like ten publications and they were all government books." Library patrons could not check out the books, which were arranged on a single shelf.

Plans to return to Mozambique on another mission trip led D'Souza to suggest to Nathan that he spearhead an effort to collect donated books for the new school's library as his Eagle Scout project. Selfishly, she wanted her two children — both avid readers — to have access to a larger selection of English-language books when they returned to Africa. But even after her family decided they weren't going back, D'Souza continued to urge Nathan to go forward with the project. She understood the great need for books in Mozambique from her experiences as an educator

there trying to teach children another language (English) without any materials.

"It's everybody's kids (in Mozambique) who don't have books to read," said D'Souza.

Anyone wanting to support Nathan's goal of collecting 5,000 books may donate books or money to help pay shipping costs during the Woodford County Farmers Market on Saturday, Aug. 7, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the courthouse square on Main Street. The book titles needed for the school's library and additional information can be accessed on Nathan's Eagle Project Web site: libraryforafrica.com.

"I accept used (books) as long as they're in good shape," said Nathan. "Hardbacks are preferred, but I'll take paperback too."

Thinking big

Doug and Tamarin Vick overcame initial apprehensions and supported their son's project because they understood how important it was for Nathan to earn an Eagle Scout Award as his father did. "And it wasn't surprising to me that he was thinking big because he tends to think big," said Tamarin Vick.

"So if that's what he wanted to do then we would see a way to help him do it."

The International Book Project has agreed to provide a large container to ship Nathan's books to Mozambique. And staffers at the Woodford County Library gave him information about cataloging and processing books for his project.