

## School pushes wheelchair fund

By **Karen Johnson**  
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Alyssa Adwell pushes eighth-grader Brittany Insixiengmay in a lightweight wheelchair at Nelsen Middle School in Renton. Nelsen students are working to raise \$26,600 to send 550 of the special **wheelchairs** to Ghana in West Africa.

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Getting to Ghana takes two days and costs well over \$1,000, but a group of students at Nelsen Middle School in Renton has found another way to reach the country.

This month, Nelsen students launched a fundraiser to provide 550 specially made **wheelchairs** to residents of the West African country.

"It's so easy to forget so many things are happening in other parts of the world," said Brittany Insixiengmay, 14, one of the organizers of the fundraiser.

Nelsen counselor Scott Jones said students decided to raise money for the **wheelchairs** after watching a movie that featured a wheelchair built by the Free Wheelchair Mission, a California-based nonprofit that makes **wheelchairs** for about \$50 each and sends them to other countries.

Groups from around the nation have raised money for the affordable **wheelchairs**, which are made from with a lightweight metal frame, a plastic lawn chair and mountain bike tires. Nelsen students believe they are the first group of middle-school students to join the effort.

Students selected Ghana as the recipient of their donation because social-studies teacher, Sarah Cockle is teaching in the country this year.

Cockle has kept students posted on her activities in the country through a blog that she updates about once a week, students said.

So far, Nelsen students have pitched their fundraiser to local churches, service groups and even other schools. They've even gone to the Web to get the word out. Earlier this month, one student posted an online petition that has been pasted to hundreds of pages on [MySpace.com](http://MySpace.com).

"Students are saying they've caught the vision," Jones said. "They're bringing the school together by doing something for others."

Students said they were drawn to the cause because its unlike anything else they'd raised money for.

"This isn't like selling cheesy magazines for prizes," said eighth-grader Cherise Wade, 14. "This is a real cause."

In little more than two weeks, the school has collected \$1,000, Jones said. But the students will have to raise much more to meet their goal of \$26,600.

For more information on Nelsen Middle School's wheelchair fundraiser, call Jones at 425-204-3013.

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