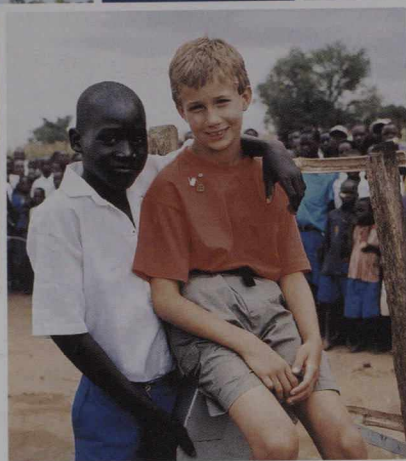




Ryan watches the drilling of the first "Ryan's Well" in Uganda. He has helped to contribute funds for wells in Ethiopia, Malawi and Zimbabwe, and is working with Canadian Olympic gold medal wrestler, Daniel Igali, to build a well and school in Nigeria, Daniel's birthplace.



Jimmy Akana and Ryan Hreljac at the first "Ryan's Well" in Uganda in July 2000

## Inspiring children to make a difference

From its humble beginnings in 1990, a global education project run by the Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE) has grown to involve about 400 primary school classes across Canada.

Every Valentine's Day, as part of Project Love, young students prepare thousands of packages of school supplies that are shipped to students in Africa and the Caribbean.

"There are so many ways to integrate Project Love into the curriculum," says Judith George-Landles, a teacher at Churchill Alternative School in Ottawa who has been involved in the project for close to a decade. In her classes, students learn about the nature of community, food, music and how climate affects our choice of housing. One year, they learned about landmines and she integrated the lesson into a schoolyard game.

While children typically depend on parents and teachers to tell them about global issues, sometimes the tables get turned.

In 1998, six-year-old Ryan Hreljac learned at his school in Kemptville, Ontario, that people in Africa did not

have easy access to clean water. He begged his parents for \$75, the amount he thought was needed to drill a well. To humour him, his parents gave him extra chores to earn the money.

When Ryan brought his \$75 to WaterCan, a Canadian NGO that builds wells in developing countries, he discovered he really needed \$2,000. Undeterred, he kept going. Two years later, the well was built, and he travelled to Uganda to see it, an odyssey captured in a documentary film called *Ryan's Well*, which premiered on Vision TV in November 2001.

Meanwhile, word of Ryan's work quickly spread. Cheques addressed to "Ryan's Well" began to arrive. There was a cover story in *Reader's Digest*, an appearance on the Oprah Winfrey show and countless presentations to schools and community groups. He's met Dr. Jane Goodall, Prime Minister Chrétien, the Prince



Photo: ACIDI/CIDA: Pierre St. Jacques

of Wales, and in the fall of 2002 Governor General Adrienne Clarkson will present him with a Meritorious Service Decoration (Civil Division).

Today, Ryan's Well Foundation accepts donations from all over the world, which it channels to WaterCan and Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR). By May 2002, the Foundation—with matching contributions from CIDA—had raised about \$500,000 for new wells in Africa. It has also received funding from DEAFIT.

The family tries hard to carve out time for Ryan to be a 10-year-old. He figures he spends about a quarter of his time on Foundation work. "The rest of the time I'm just a kid going to school," he says. Ryan's message is not simply about the need for clean water. Rather, it's that everyone—no matter how young—can make a difference in the world. 🍁

Children carry water for the family from the village well. In Africa, women and children often walk 4-5 km to get water.

Photo: ACIDI/CIDA: Stephanie Colvey

