

Long Hill man's 'Solar suitcase' lights a school in Tanzania



Millington resident Terry Carruthers is providing a “Solar suitcase” that will help light a schoolhouse in Tanzania’s back country. The 24-inch suitcase can power up electricity for several house during the day and will be housed in the school’s library so students can study after classes.

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LONG HILL TWP. – A Millington man is helping to shed light on education for elementary school students in Tanzania, Africa.

The man, Terry Carruthers of White Bridge Road, has compiled a “solar suitcase” that contains solar panels and rechargeable batteries to supply power to 12 LED cluster lights.

The equipment, which can be easily placed in a 24-inch suitcase, will light up a classroom at the Kangabusharo Primary School, which, like most schools in rural Tanzania, has no electricity.

The suitcase is being donated by the Basking Ridge-based non-profit organization SHannon’s Afterschool Reading Exchange or SHARE, founded by Shannon McNamara, that seeks to empower African girls through education.

This week, McNamara and her family traveled to Bukoba, Tanzania, bringing the 25- pound solar suitcase along with them on the 48-hour journey. The McNamaras will install the mini solar generators in the Kangabusharo library SHARE built in March 2009.

“Children cannot learn after school hours, and during the day in the long rainy season, because of darkness,”

said McNamara prior to her departure.

“The area has about eight months of heavy rain. When it rains the entire place gets dark even at midday, so the children are often being taught in darkness.”

Carruthers’ company, Creative Energy, offers innovative solar solutions especially for artistic, educational or promotional situations. Carruthers, a native of Dublin, Ireland, moved to the U.S. in 2004.

On Monday, Carruthers said the portable system “suited our needs admirably because of the difficulty and expense of shipping materials to Tanzania by containers,” Carruthers said.

He said the system will be installed in the school’s library, where “the kids can come to after school when they want to read.”

The solar suitcase and equipment cost about \$600. The funds were donated by Carruthers’ good friend, Jeanne Overstreet, of Pownal, Vt. She is an active 91 year old who Carruthers first met on a tour in Ireland many years ago.

“We are so grateful to Terry Carruthers for putting the solar suitcase together, and donating his time and expertise,” McNamara said.

For more information on SHARE visit www.shareinafrica.org.

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