Quincy students do their part to end child labor

Project raises cash to help educate Vietnamese girls

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QUINCY – Students are keeping their promise to continue the mission of a Pakistani boy who was murdered shortly after he visited the Broad Meadows Middle School in 1994.

Iqbal Masih, 12, an escaped child laborer turned human rights activist, was murdered in his native Pakistan a few months after he visited Quincy.

Since that visit, local students have been raising money for various organizations around the world whose mission includes keeping children out of the hands of slave traders.

Forty Quincy students will devote a day of their spring break tomorrow to raising money to educate 40 girls in Vietnam who are at risk of being sold into child labor.

This year's project will place the Vietnamese girls, who are 10 to 14 years old, into residential schooling. Their parents will be given livestock, seeds and expert training on how to be more efficient farmers. Their mothers will receive micro-credit loans to start small craft businesses.

The day of work is part of a national effort called Operation Day's Work-USA, which Quincy students co-founded seven years ago to honor Masih.

Students vote on which country and which nongovernmental organization to partner with for their annual education project. The federal Agency for International Development helps students write requests for project proposals and screen nongovernmental organizations.

This year, students chose to work with the Heifer Project. Heifer is a charitable organization that promotes sustainable development to end world hunger.

In the morning, Quincy students will rake away winter debris and plant a Children's Peace Garden outside of the children's room at Thomas Crane Public Library in Quincy Center. In the afternoon, 20 Quincy High School students will run a workshop on Vietnamese culture.

Garden planting begins at 9 a.m. and the culture workshop begins at 1 p.m.