

Racing for Peace, Water & Wisdom

-Interact Club, Zhen Humen

Scores of Marblehead students, their families and friends, are expected to turn out Sunday, October 28, to walk and race for Peace, Water & Wisdom. The event is a fundraiser for The BARKA Foundation which works with local communities in the US to raise water consciousness and implement water initiatives in Burkina Faso, Africa, one of the poorest and most water-stressed nations in the world.

The 5km "Peace, Water & Wisdom Race/Walk" around the Marblehead Neck is being sponsored by the Interact Club at Marblehead High School with support from Endicott College. Endicott students are helping MHS Interactors with marketing, outreach and publicity. MHS Interact students are affiliated with Rotary. Rotary Clubs in Marblehead and Swampscott are working with BARKA Foundation to support a forthcoming water project in a village in Burkina Faso where women walk 7km for water every day. The event is also being coordinated with the Student Environmental Action Committee (SEAC) of John Bapst High School in Bangor, Maine which established the Peace, Water & Wisdom Race/Walk in Bangor last year.

Earlier this year SEAC students from Bapst High School reached out to Marblehead High School's Interact Club as a result of both groups working with BARKA Foundation for the past 3 years. Joan Stomatuk, Jim Nye, and Jack Attridge serve as liaisons between Marblehead students, BARKA Foundation and local Rotary Clubs. "After speaking with student leaders from Bapst High School, I presented this opportunity to the MHS Interact Club and they were excited to expand the race to Marblehead," said Joan Stomatuk, Interact Club Advisor. Kelly Roland and Brian Hough, Co-Presidents of the Interact Club, say, "When we returned to school we hit the ground running. The club decided to take this on because we believe in the cause and BARKA's ability to use the funds we raise to make people's lives better in Burkina Faso." The club has set its fundraising goal for \$5,000. Funds are raised through sponsorship, individual donations and event registrations.

"The truly remarkable thing is the way we see young people stepping up to take on their role as leaders to bring positive changes to the world", said Ina & Esu Anahata, BARKA's co-founders. Students are already signing up sponsors and participants to race or walk. The race takes place at Devereux Beach beginning at 10 am (on-site registration begins at 9 am). Registration is also available online at www.peacewaterwisdom.org.

Burkina Faso is a landlocked West African country which has a 20% infant mortality rate largely due preventable water-borne illness. Money collected will be used to provide the community of Lampiadi with a new well and basic hygiene education. Earlier this year, BARKA drilled a well and constructed composting latrines in a small rural Burkina Faso village partly through funds raised by Marblehead students and community members. The BARKA Foundation is an UN-

affiliated 501(c) 3 charitable organization. “Barka” is an African word of gratitude, blessing and reciprocity. More information can be found at <http://www.barkafoundation.org>

To be a sponsor, make a donation, or register for the Marblehead event please email stomatuk.joan@marbleheadschoools.org. Registration and sponsor forms are also available in the main office of Marblehead High School, 2 Humphrey Street, Marblehead, MA.

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