



**Everyday  
People**  
Make A  
**Difference**

*Celebrating Everyday Heroes: Jones Middle School Students*

# Never Say Never

*Determined middle school students reach out to help the Lost Boys of Sudan*

**M**argaret Mead once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. In fact, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

As a living testimony to those words, **84 students from Loretta Heigle’s social studies classes at Jones Middle School** not only took on the plight of the **Sudanese refugees** called the “**Lost Boys**” — they learned some valuable life lessons along the way.

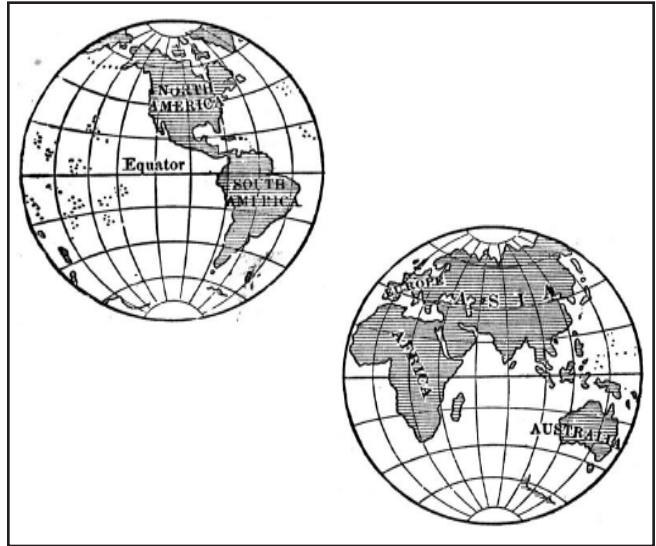
## News Article Inspires Students to Help

It all began when Heigle’s classes read a *Junior Scholastic* news magazine article about the “**Lost Boys**.” Unlike their namesake, Peter Pan’s abandoned friends, the young refugees’ story was far from a fairy tale.

**What?**  
What happened in the story?  
What problem were Loretta and her students concerned about?

For almost twenty years, Sudan, located in northeastern **Africa**, has been wracked by *civil war*. Over **20,000 children**, most the same age as the Jones Middle School students, have been displaced. Their **parents are dead or missing**. Girls fare better, since other families often take them in. So *refugee camps* quickly fill with orphaned boys — the *lost boys*.

Heigle’s classes were particularly touched by the story of the boys moving between camps through **crocodile-infested rivers** to reach their destination. The students began to brainstorm ways to help and try to make a difference in the lives of the *Lost Boys*.



## Many Lessons are Learned through Service-Learning Project

Though an inspired example of service-learning, Heigle’s classes began **intensive fundraising** and got busy **learning**. Extensive Internet searches on Sudan, Africa and the **Dinka tribe** provided valuable **geography lessons**. **Portfolios were created** with in-class writings and correspondence. But perhaps the biggest lesson of all was the **lesson of empathy**. “I have never seen a group of kids take the initiative like

*“I have never seen a group of kids take the initiative like these kids*

these kids did,” said Heigle. “They were so inspired and motivated by this article and the circumstances of the children in Sudan.”

The students held a bake sale and canvassed the cafeteria for spare change from diners. While **fund-raising and philanthropy** were a big part of their efforts, they also **created more than 100 shoeboxes with needed personal hygiene items, school supplies and toys.**

## Students Find Many Ways to Use Gifts and Interests to Help Others

Students used their individual **gifts and interests** to help the cause. Young **public relations whizzes** contacted local reporters, wrote public service announcements and legislators.

**Fledgling philanthropists** raised money and support among other classes. **Computer enthusiasts** headed up on-line research.

Through a variety of activities, the class **raised more than \$4,000** to donate to UNICEF.

“At first our goal was \$1,000,” said Heigle. “We quickly met that mark, and then I had the kids vote on whether they wanted to keep going. They did.”

## A Legacy of Caring is Created

The story didn’t end when the school year ended. Eager to stay involved, **many students wanted to work with incoming sixth graders** during the next school year to keep the effort alive.

**The Columbus Mayor’s office and Columbus and Upper Arlington city councils** have recognized the students for their service to others.

Former **Senator John Glenn** paid them a visit so he could share what they were doing with other schools. In his role as *Chairman of the National Commission on Service-Learning*, Glenn praised the youngsters’ project as a model for other schools.

## A Teacher’s Lessons Go Beyond the Textbook

Heigle’s students have learned that their energy and resourcefulness can make an enormous difference in a world where many are less fortunate. Middle schooler **Jessie Hale** said it best: “I think our class has made such a difference. Not only have we set out to do something good and actually done it, but we have also encouraged others around us to actually participate with us. **Who said that one small group can’t accomplish anything? We proved that we can!**”

## Now What Could You And Your Friends Do To Help?

Now that you have read about Loretta’s students and their efforts to help the “Lost Boys of Sudan,” what could you and your classmates do to make a difference? Just like Loretta and her kids, there are people everywhere making a difference. Can you find an *Everyday Hero* in your community who is making a difference in important issues? Let us know what you and others in your community are doing by posting your information on . . . [www.partnershipsmakeadifference.org](http://www.partnershipsmakeadifference.org).

To learn more about how to help children affected by civil war, log on to . . .

*International Rescue Committee:*  
[www.theirc.org/about/index.cfm](http://www.theirc.org/about/index.cfm)

In addition, you may find these sites helpful:

*World of Children:* [www.WorldOfChildren.Org](http://www.WorldOfChildren.Org)

*U.S. fund for UNICEF:* [www.unicefusa.org](http://www.unicefusa.org)

*Children’s Defense Fund:*  
[www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

*Haitian Health Foundation:*  
[www.haitianhealthfoundation.org](http://www.haitianhealthfoundation.org)

**So What?**  
What gifts did Loretta’s students use to help their efforts succeed? What character traits did they demonstrate?

**Now What?**  
What could happen next? What could you and your class do to make a difference in your world?

**So What?**  
What difference did it make that Loretta’s students chose to get involved in this issue?