



Published September 19, 2011, 04:00 PM

## Kids draw pictures as fundraising effort

Eight-year-old Alayna Strunk has always had a big heart and caring personality.

By: Regan Carstensen, The Republican Eagle

Eight-year-old Alayna Strunk has always had a big heart and caring personality.

"If there's ever a need she wants to fill it," Alayna's mom, Jill, said. "We're pretty proud of her."

When tragedies — such as hurricanes, floods or diseases — strike, she's eager to contribute however she can.

Most recently, Alayna is determined to aid in a campaign to end malaria overseas. After being told by her father, First United Methodist Church Pastor Greg Strunk, that the church was going to start raising money to fight malaria, Alayna quickly jumped on board and ran with her own ideas.

"I wanted to help save lives in Africa," she said.

Not only was she eager to raise money, Alayna got her 5-year-old brother, Mathias, involved as well. The two decided to draw pictures with grass, trees and ponds and put stickers of animals on them to resemble what they'd see in Africa. The kids also included sayings on the drawings, like "Help end malaria."

In addition to the pictures, Alayna and Mathias created bracelets out of craft supplies as another fundraising endeavor.

"Whatever it was we had around the house, they're just like, 'Here, we can do this,'" Jill joked.

Every Sunday at church, Alayna sells the drawings and bracelets for 50 cents or \$1, though she's been overpaid on more than one occasion by generous buyers.

"She also went door-to-door in the neighborhood, unbeknownst to Mom and Dad," Greg explained. "All of a sudden she comes in one day and says, 'Mommy, I got 12 bucks.'"

Between selling at church and throughout her Red Wing neighborhood, Alayna has collected more than \$30 that she can donate.

"She's saved three lives," Greg noted, explaining that it costs less than \$10 to save someone from malaria in Africa.

Although Mathias and Alayna's fundraising is well under way, First United Methodist Church's campaign — which is part of a larger project with all United Methodist churches — doesn't officially begin until Oct. 2, when "Imagine No Malaria" field coordinator Leia Williams of Nashville, Tenn., will give a presentation at the service.

The campaign will last for three years, and Greg said all of the money his church collects will be matched dollar for dollar.

"Our church's goal is to save 1,500 lives," he said, explaining that the campaign lasts until 2015. "By then, the hope is that (malaria's) gone."

With about 150 people attending an average First United Methodist service in Red Wing each Sunday morning, a \$100 donation from each person over the course of three years makes the goal pretty achievable. Plus, the matching grant will allow them to technically save closer to 3,000 lives.

Combined with funds from other United Methodist churches across the nation, the goal of eliminating the disease by 2015 is within reach.

Money raised will be used to purchase bed nets and medicine, as well as go toward other preventative measures like performing diagnostic tests and improving sanitation in the country.

Anxious to inspire and encourage others, Alayna has wanted to speak to her church's members about the importance of eliminating malaria in Africa.

"She's very bold until Sunday morning," Greg said with a laugh.

Even though nerves may keep Alayna from getting up in front of the crowd, they haven't held her back from diving right into fundraising efforts and caring about lives in Africa.

"That's what's kind of neat — she's done it all on her own," Greg said. "The fact that it was self-initiated, it was neat to see her just take it on."

**Tags:** benefits and fundraisers, lifestyle, religion, social