

## Students absorb many lessons of author's 'Three Cups of Tea'

By **KATIE KALVAITIS** • For the Courier-Post • May 20, 2010

**HARRISON** — Students at Friends School Mullica Hill took away an important lesson from their yearlong study of Greg Mortenson's book, "Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace . . . One School at a Time."

"It's a true story of how people can do little things and really make a difference in the world," seventh-grader Talia Kramer said.

The book was chosen to be part of the school's first One School, One Book program, which was co-sponsored by the Multicultural Board and Leadership Team.

The story follows author Mortenson in his dangerous and difficult quest to build schools in the Middle East. Mortenson's journey led him from a failed attempt to climb Pakistan's K2 mountain in 1993 to a remote, impoverished Pakistani village that could not afford the \$1 a day it cost to hire a schoolteacher. He decided he wanted to help, and, since 1993, Mortenson has established 78 schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

"The lesson I got from the book is that people really do care about each other, not just themselves," said Casey Sanders, also in the seventh grade.

The book and its teachings about a global community, peace and education align with the school's mission, said principal Patti Sanderson. Sanderson and Nicole Donnelly, a Spanish teacher at the school, are both on the Multicultural Board and helped organize the yearlong project.

The school hosted a variety of activities throughout the school year that were designed to bring meaning to the book.

The "First Cup of Tea" activity involved families sharing something unique about themselves with the rest of the community at the Back to School Picnic in June. The "Second Cup of Tea" was an all-around art night in which students, faculty and

family members worked together to create pop-up cards around the themes of peace, education and community.

During the first week of May, the school participated in the "Third Cup of Tea" activities. To celebrate the culmination of the yearlong study, more than 75 community members gathered to discuss the book while sampling traditional Pakistani food, such as dried apricots and chai tea.

The students enjoyed the food because it was "not like anything we have here," Talia said.

Other final activities were designed to help students learn more about the current situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Students also made tea bags from assorted loose tea leaves, simulated a typical school day in Pakistan and played common Pakistani games, such as pushing a bicycle tire with a stick.

"My favorite thing was playing all the games that kids in other countries play," said seventh-grader Charlie Hughes. "Even though they might not have schools or toys like us, they are not very different."

Casey said the activities helped her feel "really connected to everyone, not just in the school but in the community."

For the last four years, the school has also participated in Pennies for Peace, a service project started by Greg Mortenson's daughter that encourages students to collect pennies to raise

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money for building schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

"Because I am an educator, I hope that this project leads children to see how important their education is and how other people in the world don't have the same privileges. The more educated you can be, the more of an impact you can have on the world," Sanderson said.

The school hopes the year's activities helped the community reflect about how education can be a route to bringing peace to the world.

"No matter what we have or don't have, we are all just kids and want the same things," Talia said.

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Friends School Mullica Hill students Keith Williams (left) and Alyssa Lukens (center) check out different teas while making tea bags at the school. (JOHN ZIOMEK/Courier-Post)

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