

The Water Challenge

What is the one thing that every person in the world needs every day? Water. (5-13 gallons of it per day, to be exact.) In the United States, we are blessed to have access to an abundance of clean water for brushing our teeth, washing our clothes, our dishes, our bodies, cooking, and, of course, drinking. But over a billion people in developing countries, such as sub-Saharan Africa, do not have access to the very thing that keeps us clean, healthy, and alive.

At St. Joan of Arc School, we always strive to care for others and the environment. So, when we were asked to participate in The Water Challenge, through The Water Project, Inc., all of us joined the cause. Participants are asked to drink nothing but water in a reusable bottle for two weeks and document the milk, juice, soda, and coffee they eliminate. At the end of two weeks, each person donates the money they saved by choosing water over other drinks. The goal is for each person to raise \$23. A few months after the money is returned to The Water Project, Inc., donors will receive a report of where their money went, including GPS coordinates! It turns their small sacrifice into something big and important.



The idea is similar to the kind of fasting we do in Lent. The Water Challenge offers us the chance to think about those who have less than we do and to appreciate something we often take advantage. It also enables us to avoid the waste associated with disposable water bottles. Finally, it encourages us to take better care of our bodies by avoiding caffeinated and sugary drinks.

It was a rough start for many of the students, including my second-grader Collin. They were upset that they wouldn't be able to enjoy the juices they ordered for hot lunch or the lemonade at our Chik-fil-a fundraiser night. It was a big change for little kids, but when teachers like myself rose up to the challenge, our involvement and the reminder wristbands they wore inspired the students to stay on board.

Now the students are excited about their small sacrifice to make the world a better place. Collin even got my tea-drinking parents involved. They send us photo updates to let us know that they're drinking their H₂O! (Now that we've got them hooked, we need to convert them to reusable water bottles!)



It's not too late for you or your organization to participate in The Water Challenge. If you're not a fan of tap water, you can buy a filter for your sink or a pitcher for your refrigerator. Even my gym has an awesome water fountain filter! An excellent selection of reusable water bottles can be found in many stores and on Amazon.com. Nalgene, Camelback, and Tervis make excellent leak-proof bottles and cups in a variety of sizes. I'm a big fan of the coated aluminum canteens like the 32 oz. mint green one I have by Simple Modern. My water stays cold for 24 hours!



Since we started The Water Project I have more energy and am more aware of my water usage in other settings. I've been thinking about those who suffer because of their limited access to potable water. I hope that the money we donate can help make their lives better. Above all, I thank God for providing my family with a safe, clean source of the one thing we need most.