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# Jewellery designer donates time and money to children in Africa

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Kelly Hartman uses her Jewellery talent to raise funds for Pencils for Kids to aid kids in West Africa.

Rena Green Tribune Intern

TORONTO – When Kelly Hartman first met Robin Mednick, founder of Pencils for Kids, she felt an instant connection. As her intense desire to get involved grew, Hartman tapped into her talent for jewellery making, and started a new program in the hopes of doing her part to better the lives of children in need.

Pencils for Kids (P4K), a charity that raises funds, donates school supplies and runs various programs and scholarships for children in Niger, West Africa, was started

in 2005 when a member of the Pencils for Kids team visited the African village, and witnessed 30 children in a classroom sharing just one pencil.

After getting in touch with the Canadian Embassy in Niger, Mednick and her team created a bond with the African community. Not only has Pencils for Kids built a school in the village of Oulmantama, which now provides education for more than 100 students, they have also created programs such as Sewing Centres and Farmers of the Future – initiatives that teach children how to sew their own clothing and grow their own produce, giving them the skills to provide for themselves.

“What attracted me to the charity initially [was] the scholarship for girls program,” said Hartman, who minored in women’s studies at Wilfred Laurier University. “Because the success rate of girls moving through the school system [in Niger] is so much lower than it is for boys, [Robin] decided that something needed to be done specifically for girls.”

While heading the girl’s scholarship program, Hartman came to learn of the many other programs and initiatives P4K ran, and knew it was time to create a project of her own.

“I never studied [jewellery making], but I’d always been creating things on my own and I started buying new materials and becoming more inspired in terms of creating,” she said. “I started thinking, ‘I don’t want to just buy things and sell them, and since I’m connected to this amazing charity, what better way to keep donating on a consistent basis?’”

Selling her jewellery at various events, and hoping to host jewellery parties in the near future, Hartman has found a way to do what she loves, while lending a helping hand.

“[Jewellery making] comes very naturally to me,” Hartman explained. “My philosophy is that if something comes that easily to you, you’re probably meant to do it.”

With the hopes of expanding her jewellery business, Hartman still values her connection to the charity above all else.

“No matter where this takes me, I always want to be partnered with Pencils for Kids,” she said. “Even if I got into retail stores and people are selling my jewellery, it would always be coming back to Pencils for Kids as my main inspiration.”

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