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Opinion

Editorial: You don't need to save the world as Katie does to make a difference



Villagers who use the school created by Katie Hilborn in JanaJyoti, Nepal, gave her a traditional red tikka as a symbol of gratitude and happiness. The red powder is a mixture of yogurt and rice grains. *Courtesy Global Orphan Prevention*

The Daily Herald Editorial Board

Posted October 19, 2015 11:00 pm

You might have read Sunday's story about Katie Hilborn, the former St. Charles

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You would not be alone.

Hilborn, 32, grew up in St. Charles.

She participated as a teenager in the youth group at St. Charles Episcopal Church and, as many do, learned the value and the high one achieves through helping others on mission trips.

From the start, her group leader told Staff Writer James Fuller, Hilborn had bigger dreams.

Instead of helping people in the U.S., she set her sights on Ireland, and she learned a lot about fundraising in the process.

After college in 2006, she focused on the enormous income gap between her hometown and places such as Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

Over the years she developed a strong desire to help orphans, having been adopted herself, and began volunteering at some of Nepal's 800 orphan homes.

To combat that problem, she attacked the poverty that spawned it and worked to equip people with cows so they might generate some income.

She learned that what parents really wanted was for their children to become educated so they could improve their lives to a greater degree.

So she raised money to build a school.

And after an earthquake in April devastated Nepal, she learned that another outgrowth of the poverty there was that thousands of girls were being sold into prostitution in neighboring India. Katie's latest outreach combines her previous missions - making schools an economic engine for the Nepalis.

It's exhausting just to think about how Katie thinks, let alone try to imagine the fortitude it requires to take all of this on.

Not everyone has the freedom or the gumption to do what she does. The majority of us are not leaders, like Hilborn, and that's fine. Without followers, leaders in such efforts are just people with good hearts and ideas.

One need not work on Hilborn's scale to effect change in people's lives.

Helping out at a homeless shelter, reading for the blind, writing a check for cancer research. There is an endless supply of opportunities for which to volunteer. And there is always something that's right for you if you look hard enough.

"The joy in people's eyes when you've changed their lives, it's just a rush," Hilborn told Fuller. "Helping people can become an addiction. It feels so good. You just always feel like, 'OK, I want to help someone else now.' "

As philosopher Lau-Tzu said, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

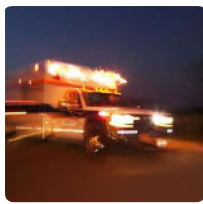
- If you want to help Hilborn's cause, visit

globalorphanprevention.org. If you want to get involved locally, try handsonsuburbanchicago.org.

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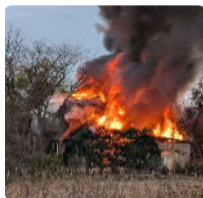
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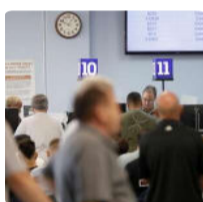
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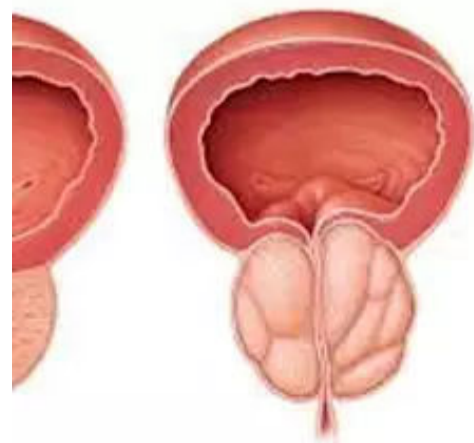
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