

## Teacher not dodging minefield

### St. Francis educator gathers info about land mines across Bosnia

Art teacher Nora Sheets meets with students at a school for disabled children in Sarajevo, Bosnia.

BY JAKE STUMP  
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To spread the word about the dangers of land mines, St. Francis Catholic School art teacher Nora Sheets traveled to Sarajevo, Bosnia.

As sponsor of Students Against Land Mines, Sheets wanted to understand the feelings of citizens in a mine-ridden country like Bosnia and bring the ideas to the United States, where she intends to educate others about the explosive issue.

During her five-day stay at the end of October, Sheets delivered 65 pounds of art supplies to a school for disabled children in Sarajevo.

Garfield's restaurant and the students of St. Francis donated the items.

"When I made my first trip to Bosnia last year, I was appalled to see how little supplies they had. This time, a local business and a school worked together to help an entire school of kids. It worked out better than I thought. I had complained about lugging that suitcase around with me, but after I got there, I thought I should have brought another."

Sheets also met with Kemo, a 10-year-old Bosnian who lost a leg in a land mine explosion. Because Sheets' students raised \$1,200 last year, Kemo now has a properly fitted prosthetic leg.

"It's just amazing," Sheets said. "He's adjusted well to his new limb and has blossomed into an athlete. He first envisioned becoming a basketball player, but when he got the new limb, he became a soccer player." Aside from a few of the more heart-warming highlights of the trip, Sheets noticed the ills of a Third World country devastated by war.

"I saw the long-term effect of the Bosnian War," she said. "A decade has passed, and the city's still recovering. It's shocking to get off the plane and see the devastation still there."

Sheets visited Bosnia last year to attend the Conference on Humanitarian Law and Land Mine Removal. Sheets and her students first learned about the land mine issue when some concerned students researched the topic for an art project a few years ago.

Since then, the group has worked to educate others on their humanitarian project, going as far as lobbying the nation's leaders to sign an international treaty banning land mines.

The United States and Turkey are the only two NATO nations who haven't signed the Mine Ban Treaty, which prohibits using, stockpiling, producing and transferring anti-personnel mines.

With the United States inching toward a conflict with Iraq, Sheets and her students want to increase land mine awareness.

Sheets said some of her students read an article in *USA Today* that reported the United States could use land mines if it invades Iraq.

"It seems that we're back-tracking," Sheets said. "We made some awareness and received bipartisan support on banning land mines, but now it seems we're back-tracking." According to the "U.S. Campaign to Ban Land Mines," there are 60 million to 70 million land mines in the ground in 68 countries. One hundred million more are stockpiled.

"We are lucky in Morgantown, W.Va., that children don't have to worry about stepping on land mines on their way to school," Sheets said. "When my students learned that children in Bosnia as well as countries the world over must deal with these issues, they decided to educate their community and make their voices heard."