



WELL BEING

Illinois student makes clean water a mission

Growing up in an affluent community near Lake Michigan, Connor Kenehan never had to worry about a lack of clean water. But when a class assignment opened his eyes to global disparities in water access, he decided to help those who don't have the benefit of proximity.

Kenehan founded an organization called Well Being while researching water and sanitation issues for an eighth-grade project at Deer Path Middle School in Lake Forest, Ill. Four years later, he has turned the assignment into a platform to raise funds for

clean water efforts. "Living in an area with great access to fresh water, we take it for granted," he says.

Early on, Kenehan realized that Rotarians could be powerful allies in the fight for safe water. "My friend and I were in Lake Forest with a poster, talking to people and asking for donations, and a Rotarian stopped by," he recalls. "He asked if we'd want to come to a Rotary club meeting." After the Rotary Club of Lake Forest-Lake Bluff voted to match the funds Kenehan had already raised, he gave \$3,000 to a Rotarian initiative in

Minorca, Spain, that sends LifeStraws to villages in Africa. Each inexpensive and lightweight personal water filter can remove more than 99 percent of waterborne bacteria and parasites from up to 264 gallons of water.

As Kenehan further explored global health issues and established contacts in the field, Well Being gained credibility. His parents pitched in: Bob Kenehan, now a member of the Lake Forest-Lake Bluff club, designed a logo, and JoAnn

Lucas assisted with a business plan and mission statement. Rotarians are helping Kenehan direct funds to where they're most needed: In his search for water projects, he has relied on the Water and Sanitation Rotarian Action Group, which screens service efforts and connects donors to Rotarians and projects around the world, such as freshwater wells in Guatemala and Zambia and rain-water harvesting initiatives in India and Kenya.

Most recently, Kenehan and Rotarians worked with Deer Path students on Well Being's biggest fundraiser yet. The school's annual walkathon in May raised money for several charities, including \$2,500 for the Lake Forest-Lake Bluff club, which plans to work with the Rotarian Action Group and Well Being to fund two well projects in Nigeria. Only 43 percent of rural Nigerians have access to improved drinking water sources, such as pipelines and protected wells. (The average for sub-Saharan countries is 61 percent; the United States has 99 percent coverage.)

"When I went to the middle school," Kenehan says, "I took one of those big orange buckets, and I asked the kids, 'How long do you think 5 gallons would last in the shower? How many toilet flushes?'" That visual aid caught the students' attention. When they voted on walkathon beneficiaries, the Lake Forest-

Lake Bluff club took second place.



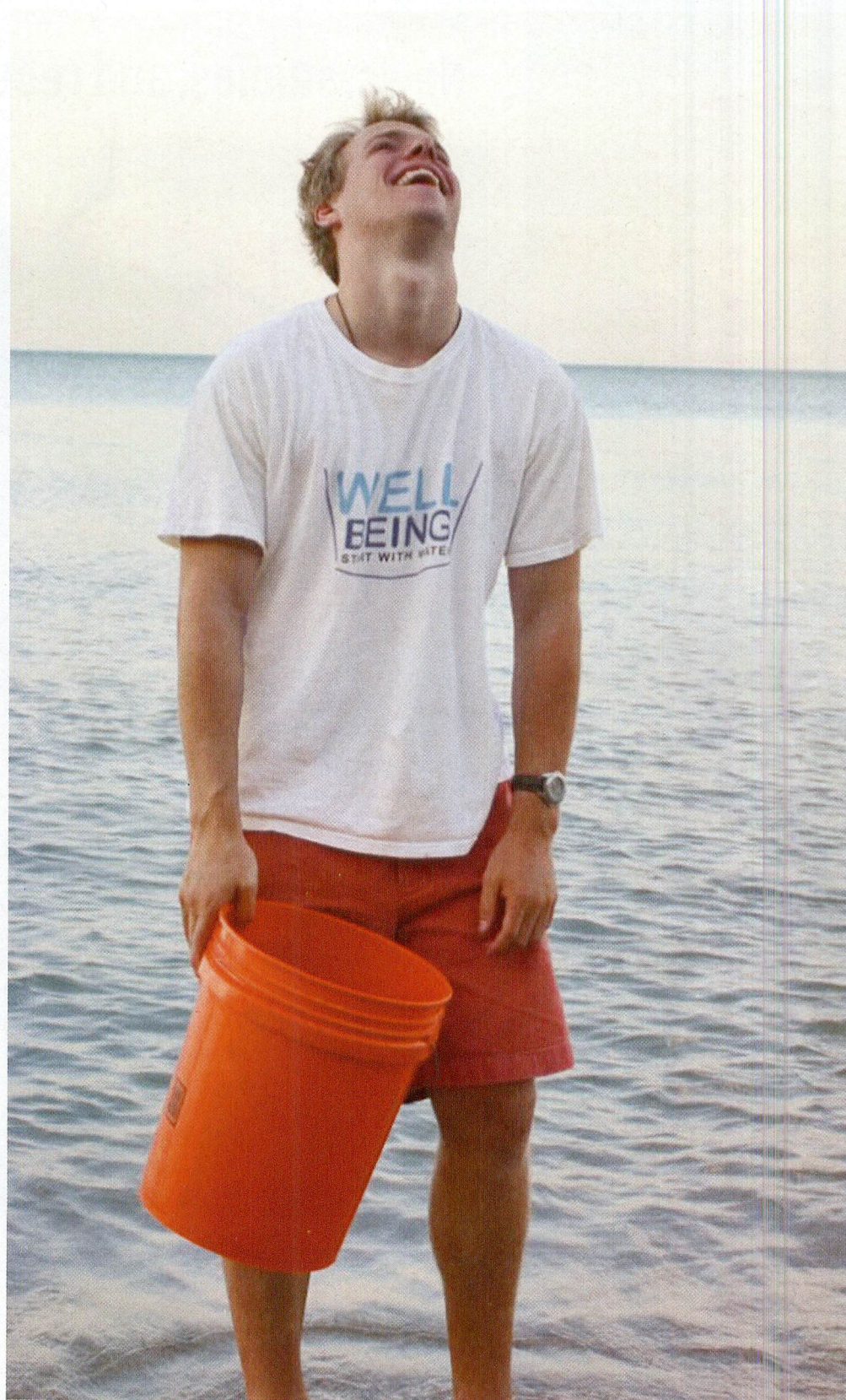
Ken Smith, a fifth-grade teacher and a student council supervisor at Deer Path, says the kids were attracted to Rotary's water and sanitation efforts because a single well project would yield tangible results. "What I liked about Rotary was that we wanted to see pictures, see something built, so that next year we'd be able to show the kids what their efforts accomplished," Smith says. "We want kids to see that they're making a difference, and why it's important."

"When Rotary entered the picture, the kids got excited because there were actual projects available for their funding," says club president Tim Newman. "Now we're trying to take that \$2,500 and see how big we can make it." The club has already matched the students' donation, and corporate sponsorship from Rotarian Action Group partners could quadruple the sum.

Now, all eyes are on the future. Newman hopes to forge a multiyear collaboration with students at Deer Path. Smith, the son of a Rotarian, hopes that last year's experience will inspire them to incorporate Rotary into their fundraising efforts for years to come.

"I want to keep it going," says Kenehan, now a freshman at Johns Hopkins University, where he plans to focus on international studies. "I want to do what I can to make sure this issue doesn't sink down to the bottom of the heap again. It's so easy to overlook in a country with sanitary conditions as good as ours."

— SALLYANN PRICE



This page: Connor Kenehan at the Lake Michigan shore near his home. The lake provides drinking water for many of the surrounding communities. Opposite: Students at Deer Path Middle School present a check for \$2,500 to the Rotary Club of Lake Forest-Lake Bluff, which plans to use the money for water projects.