



FEATURE NEWS STORY | NOVEMBER 15, 2022 **VIDEO / PHOTO OPPORTUNITY**

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DONATED SCHOOL EQUIPMENT COMPLETES JOURNEY TO WEST AFRICA
More than 700 desks and chairs from Sevier County distributed to Sierra Leone schools

SEYMOUR, Tennessee – Back in July, a small army of Sevier County School volunteers loaded up shipping crates full of old school desks and equipment to give them new life at schools in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

The donated desks were loaded into shipping containers back in July and have now arrived in West Africa and are being distributed to more than 10 schools across Sierra Leone.

Over the last few weeks, those desks have been arriving to schools in four Sierra Leone communities, thrilling students and teachers at the generosity of a small community nearly 5,000 miles away.

The desk distribution is the culmination of months of work coordinated by volunteers and leaders from Sevier County School System, Develop Africa, and DMS Health Technologies.

WHAT:

- More than 700 used desks and chairs from Sevier County School System were filling two warehouses and scheduled to be scrapped until local volunteers stepped forward to take on the challenge of giving the desks a new home with schools in West Africa.
- Patrick Doyle, a Seymour resident, lacrosse coach, and CEO of DMS Health Technologies helped spearhead an effort with leaders from Sevier County Schools and Develop Africa, a Johnson City non-profit organization to get the desks loaded onto shipping containers to be sent nearly 5,000 miles to help schools in Sierra Leone, West Africa. According to Sylvester Renner, President of Develop Africa, “It’s rare to find people like Patrick who go out of their way to make such a significant investment and impact the lives of children in Africa. These school tables and chairs will aid learning and enhance academic performance. We are deeply grateful to the schools for providing the furniture.”
- DMS Health Technologies, one of the nation’s leading providers of mobile diagnostic imaging equipment, celebrated its 50th anniversary by putting its logistics expertise to work to coordinate and fund the shipping of the desks.
- On July 11-12, scores of Sevier County student volunteers – including members of the wrestling, lacrosse, and other sports teams – loaded more than 700 desks and chairs into two shipping containers and started them on their journey to West Africa.
- After three months and nearly 5,000 miles, the desks have arrived in Sierra Leone, West Africa. The Develop Africa Sierra Leone team is distributing them to schools throughout Sierra Leone – including Kamakwie, Kamawornie, York, and Freetown.
- Videos and photos supplied by Develop Africa show excited students and teachers receiving their new school desks. According to Soffiam Mansaray, a Senior Prefect at one of the Sierra Leone schools: “I can’t remember when last we had these kinds of materials to sit on. We have been moving from metal, now to wooden chairs, which are really not comfortable - as compared to what you have given us.”

VISUALS:

- Photos and b-roll footage of Sevier County student volunteers loading desks and chairs into shipping containers in Seymour, TN back July 11.
- Photo and b-roll footage of African students of all ages and their teachers excitedly receiving the donated desks in Sierra Leone.
- On-camera interviews with representatives from the three organizations: Sevier County School Systems, Develop Africa, and DMS Health Technologies

WHO:

- Kevin McClure, Director of Operations | Sevier County Schools | Sevierville, TN
The Sevier County School System (www.sevier.org) is the tenth largest school district in Tennessee with 31 schools and nearly 15,000 students from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade.
- Sylvester Renner, Co-Founder and President, Develop Africa | Johnson City, TN
Develop Africa (www.developafrica.org) strategically empowers lives in Africa by providing educational opportunities and strengthening self-reliance so individuals, families, and communities can create positive change in their lives. The non-profit organization was founded with the aim of facilitating meaningful and sustainable development in Africa by providing education, child sponsorship, leadership development, workforce empowerment, and more to poverty-stricken communities in Africa. Develop Africa aids in breaking the cycle of poverty so future generations will be born into a healthier, more prosperous, and developed world.
- Patrick Doyle, CEO, DMS Health Technologies | Seymour, TN
DMS Health Technologies (www.dmshealth.com) is one of the country's largest providers of mobile diagnostic imaging solutions who for 50 years has delivered mobile MRI, CT, PET/CT, and Nuclear Medicine systems and services to hospitals and health care systems across the country.

WHY:

Education has no boundaries – and there is no bound to a local group's desire to put perfectly good school equipment in the hands of a group who needs it most. While it would have been much easier to simply consign these desks to the landfill, a small group of dedicated volunteers took on the challenge and cost of navigating international shipping requirements, recruited the help of local students to do the heavy lifting – and now get to enjoy seeing a group of excited young people and teachers put those desks to good use nearly 5,000 miles away in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

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