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GULLIVER PREPARATORY SCHOOL

GLOBAL ASPIRATIONS

GULLIVER PREPARATORY STUDENTS IN PINECREST GARDENS WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD AND HELP THOSE IN NEED. FUNDING A WATER WELL IN AFRICA AND AN AFGHAN SCHOOL ARE AMONG THEIR GOALS.

BY ROCIO BLANCO GARCIA
Special to The Miami Herald

A group of Gulliver Preparatory students is committed to changing the world, and they want to start by funding a well that would provide clean drinking water to an African village.

Led by Alejandro Gomez, 17, who last year founded Uniteen, a student club that helps needy communities, the students already have raised about \$3,000 for their project.

The well, however, is just the beginning of a list of goals the students hope to accomplish.

"We want to have a long-term community impact," Alejandro said.

"This is an attempt to keep motivation for promoting change," said club Vice President Adam Gonon, 17.

A recent talent show in which Gulliver students and teachers alike showed off their hidden abilities raised more than \$2,300, pushing the students closer to the \$5,390 they need to fund the well.

Through the sale of talent show DVDs and T-shirts with the slogan "Be the change you want to see in the world," the students hope to raise additional money.

"We really want to improve the lives of children and families who live in poverty," Alejandro said. "Many people want to help the world, but very few take action. We want to inspire people to do so."

An educational facility in Afghanistan and the continuous sponsorship of African children through World Vision, a global humanitarian organization with projects in more than 100 countries, are among the students' other goals.

Before the school can open its doors, however, the students



CHARITY-MINDED: Dimitri Nader-Trijos, from left, Maddy Henkin, Alejandro Gomez and Adam Gonon - all members of the Uniteen leadership group at Gulliver Prep - participate in a weekly planning meeting.

need to raise \$50,000. With the help of other Florida schools, they hope to have the necessary funds next summer.

"One penny buys a pencil," said club member Dimitri Trijos, 16. "Our goal is to introduce this project to other schools to encourage students and others to just donate pennies."

Uniteen came to life last year,

after Alejandro became inspired watching a video about Nobel Prize winners who had helped change the world.

He then met with classmates, and together they founded the organization.

Alejandro's eclectic background and his family have also inspired him.

"My parents have always told

me that it does not matter how small the change is, as long as you're helping the world," said Alejandro, who has lived in Brazil and Portugal, among other countries.

He hopes to take his projects with him to college.

During Uniteen's short existence, it has raised funds to purchase farm animals, fruit trees

and immunization packages for needy African children. The club is also continuously growing, and now counts with more than 60 members.

"The amount of enthusiasm people have put into the club is amazing," Alejandro said.

"We have so many people helping us that we just want to continue this wherever we go."