

St. Viator student sees her mission clearly

BY JOANMARIE WERMES
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When St. Viator High School junior Janice Guzon discovered that folks trash four million pairs of spectacles each year, she initiated an eyeglasses recycling project to help the world's neediest citizens.

The enterprising student founded EYEsee: Vision for the World, a service organization "committed to fighting poverty with recycled eyeglasses." EYEsee helps folks so poor that glasses would cost them a year's wages.

A visit to Holy Family Catholic Church in Inverness March 14-15 brought the total collected to nearly 5,000.

Last summer's leisure reading of Time magazine opened her eyes to the plight of the poor.

"I noticed from the photos that few African, Asian or Latin American people wore glasses," Guzon said. "Initially I thought they simply have healthier eyes, but found that of 153 million people who have eyesight problems, 138 million live in those poorer countries."

Her research showed that eyeglasses could correct millions of vision problems, but that many of the poorest

How you can help

EYEsee used glasses collection dates

- St. Emily Catholic Church, 1400 E. Central Road, Mount Prospect: Saturday, April 4, and Sunday, April 5
- St. Anne Catholic Church, 120 N. Ela St., Barrington: Saturday, April 18, and Sunday, April 19
- St. Thomas Becket Catholic Church, 1321 N. Burning Bush Lane, Mount Prospect: Saturday, April 25, and Sunday, April 26
- Addolorata Villa, 555 McHenry Road, Wheeling: Saturday, May 9
- St. Theresa Catholic Church: 455 N. Benton St., Palatine: Saturday and Sunday, May 23-24, and Tuesday, May 26

people in the world can't afford even a simple pair. And yet, 97 percent of unused eyeglasses in the U.S. remain uncollected.

"That is just too high a number to ignore in the context of the desperate need in many

Last summer, Guzon, 16, recruited Elizabeth Chin, twins Maeve and Hannah Tibbetts and Prospect High School student Rachel Conrad to

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The Rev. Mick Egan,
St. Viator president

launch EYEsee. Together they made their pleas to Northwest suburban churches. Other students joined, and St. Viator's Campus Ministry credits those hours as service to the poor and marginalized.

Guzon said the drive will benefit people in Haiti, the Philippines, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the West Bank and the Democratic Republic of Congo.



From left, volunteers Abby Moynihan, Joey Rusch, Rebecca Moynihan and EYEsee founder Janice Guzon.

EYEsee has partnered with EyeCare WeCare Foundation Inc., Physicians for Peace, Canvasback Mission Inc. and Caritas Goma.

Guzon is the daughter of Ben and Alice Guzon of Hoffman Estates and a 2006 graduate of St. Hubert Catholic School.

After high school, she plans to study theology and philosophy and become a college professor.

Guzon, editor of the school yearbook and a staff writer for "Viator Voice," also designs,

composes and produces an EYEsee newsletter.

Among the group's board of advisers is the Rev. Mick Egan, president of St. Viator High School, who says he is proud of Guzon.

"She saw a need, and, with her classmates, established EYEsee to help the needy and poor," Egan said.

"That is a wonderful example of our St. Viator students reaching out to the wider world to bring Gospel values to the service and ministry they embraced."