

# Girl gathers books for kids

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PERINTON — For some 10-year-olds, reading is a daily adventure, but for many, a book is hard to come by. That's why Natascha Yogachandra, with the help of her father, Nat Yogachandra, created "Project Book Angels," an effort to help eliminate illiteracy in underdeveloped countries.

"I love to read and I wanted to help children in other countries that don't have a lot of books," said Natascha. "I thought of what life would be like without books and I didn't like it."

So this month, Natascha, 10, shipped 1,500 books to the Children's Village in Malawi, Africa. The Children's Village is made up of 37 villages and is home to about 3,000 orphans whose parents have died of AIDS. The headquarters, in Malawi, recently built a library that will also lend to area schools.

Bob and Cindy Hunt of the Rotary Club of Fairport have visited the village twice to give the students a chance to participate in the Rotary Youth Leadership Award Camp, which teaches students team-building and leadership skills.

When Natascha heard about what the Hunts were doing, she wanted to help in some way.

"The schools over there have almost nothing," Cin-



Natascha Yogachandra, 10, sits in her garage with boxes of books ready to be shipped to children in underdeveloped countries, part of Project Book Angels.

JAMIE GERMANO staff photographer

dy Hunt said. "Those books could be wonderful learning tools."

So books were gathered from a book drive at Northside School, and Natascha's family donated \$200. The Fairport Rotarians matched the amount — giving Natascha \$400 for shipping.

Bob Hunt said Project Book Angels is a great idea because some schools in

Africa have fewer books than his own home.

The 3-year-old project has succeeded with the help of people like the Hunts, local organizations and Dudley and Northside schools in the Fairport Central School District and St. Louis School in Pittsford. Administration at the schools allowed and encouraged Natascha to set up the book drives. Stu-

dents, teachers and others donated books that were sent to schools in countries such as Kenya, India, Laos, Sri Lanka and China.

"We were a bit shy at first," Natascha said. "But everyone is helpful. I usually get tons of books."

Natascha and her father make about three book shipments every year. The two are on hiatus for the summer. Meanwhile, their

## About the series

This series on Everyday Angels runs on Mondays. Everyday Angels are stories about ordinary people who do extraordinary things for others. If you want to nominate someone to be profiled, please send an e-mail with full details to [metrodesk@DemocratandChronicle.com](mailto:metrodesk@DemocratandChronicle.com) or send a letter to Metro Desk, Democrat and Chronicle, 55 Exchange Blvd., Rochester, NY 14614.

garage is acting as a mini-library until the next shipment. About 2,500 books are stored there.

Recognizing a need locally, Project Book Angels raised more than 1,000 books for Nathaniel Rochester Community School on Adams Street and donated a \$100 check to help add to its library in 2002.

Natascha will be attending sixth grade at Martha Brown Middle School next year and looks forward to keeping the project going. She will continue to send books to Malawi and is planning a shipment to Belize next year.

For Natascha, the best part is after the books are sent. She looks forward to seeing pictures of the children who receive the books. Their happy faces are worth all the hard work, she said. □

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