

Standout people: Liz Akano

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Sun Media

February 24, 2009

AGE: 52

OCCUPATION: Information and communication technology teacher at Beal secondary school in London.



PROFILE: When Akano returned to her native Nigeria to bury her sister in 2003, she stopped to visit some rural schools. Watching kids walk eagerly into schools that were shacks brought her to tears. "Our kids here wouldn't go near those buildings, let alone walk in and sit in them. They were ready to learn; it just blew me away." Akano decided those children deserved better and started Educate the Children, a charity that aims to bridge the gap between rural and urban education systems in Africa. In Canada, Akano started fundraising with the multicultural club at Beal where she teaches. She started the club in 1994. Since then, it's been the driving force behind Black History month events at the high school and a Globe Show, which highlights various cultures. The event has grown so large it's now held on the football field. The club also holds a one-day conference in September for Grade 9 students, bringing to light issues from teen pregnancy, to drug and alcohol use and poverty that youth face. Until June last year, Akano chaired the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation's human rights committee. She stepped down because she's gone back to school and is now a master's student at the University of Western Ontario, studying educational policy.



MOTIVATION: Her father always helped people, and it rubbed off on the family. Akano hopes her acts will inspire students to realize they thrive when they help others.

QUOTE: *"Living in North America, we tend to take a lot of things for granted. I saw schools that the kids (in Nigeria) were being educated in, and it brought tears to my eyes."*

Kelly Pedro is a Free Press reporter.