

Man distributing pencils to promote learning globally

Bignell thrilled with support he's received for his ongoing initiative

By **ROBIN DOWNTON-POIRIER**
Special to The Champion

It was the simple act of posting a request on his Web site — the Pinhole Gallery — that launched Byron Bignell's effort of providing pencils and paper to children in need around the world.

The response to his request has been overwhelming.

"My kids gave me the idea just before Christmas when they were filling shoe boxes with gifts for the church (Operation Christmas Child) that are distributed in needy countries," said Mr. Bignell, an Internet application designer.

"I thought it would be great to do something year round to help. I posted the message just before Christmas on my Web site and, a few weeks later, the pencils started to arrive."

The Pinhole Gallery Web site receives approximately 2,000 hits a day worldwide and the outreach for the message is amazing, said Mr. Bignell.

To date, he has received almost 300 pencils as well as pads of paper from people in different countries who want to help his efforts.

He's in the process of contacting several international organizations to help distribute the pencils where they're needed. He said that, if pencils are needed locally, he would distribute them here as well.

"I do not want this to be a one-time thing for each group that receives the pencils either," stressed Mr. Bignell. "I want to build a relationship with them and send them pencils on an ongoing basis."

Mr. Bignell has done extensive work with many not-for-profit organizations over the years and enjoys giving back to the community and, in this case, around the world. He's setting an example for his son and daughter and said both are very excited about the pencil initiative.

"It is easy to help once a year, primarily at Christmas, but it sets a powerful example if you do it all year long," he said. "Reading and writing are basic gifts and if children are given the tools, they can thrive. The smallest change can make a difference."

Pencils can be mailed to 147 Thomas St., Milton, Ont., L9T 2E4. For more information or to help distribute the pencils, contact Mr. Bignell by e-mail at gallery@pinhole.org.

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BYRON BIGNELL



Byron Bignell shows off just a small sampling of the pencils he's received as part of his ongoing efforts to send pencils and paper to children in need around the world.

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