

Rothwell Figg Pro Bono Efforts Support STEM Students and Fund School Desks for Refugees in Malawi

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Key Contact

R. Danny Huntington

A donation by Rothwell Figg to the Pennington School, a *pro bono* client, funded desks for children at the Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi. The desks, designed by students from the Pennington School, not only provide a clean, safe, and functional place for refugee children to learn off of the floor, but give dignity to those displaced who deeply value the opportunity to learn. Another invention by the students, the WISSP pad, is changing the lives of women in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp. Rothwell Figg is proud to support young STEM students as they design a better world that works for everyone, and in the process, provide support for refugees in Malawi.

Firm partner Sharon Crane leads the intellectual property *pro bono* work for the Pennington School and recently filed a utility and a design patent for a semi-reusable menstrual pad for the girls and women at the Dzaleka Refugee Camp designed by WISSP (Women in STEM Solving Problems) from the Pennington School. The lack of sanitary products in developing countries is a major reason girls must leave school when they reach puberty. The innovative product, the WISSP pad, allows teenage girls to stay in school while also creating an economic infrastructure for refugee women who can sew and sell the pad. WISSP was a finalist in both HP's Girls Save the World contest and the MIT Solv[ED] Youth Innovation Challenge, and was the grand prize winner in the Whalebone Magazine x Faherty Brand Lemonade Stand contest.

A separate group from the Pennington School designed a sturdy classroom desk for the crowded classrooms at the Dzaleka Refugee Camp. The desks, made of steel and wood, two materials easily available in Malawi, are designed to optimize space and provide seating for 100 students in a 20 foot by 20 foot classroom. The desks can be economically made from a simple design in a nearby factory, and give students a place to sit and work instead of the damp, concrete floor. Through a monetary donation from the firm and a matching donation from Sharon and firm partner R. Danny Huntington, we were able to fill a classroom with desks.

In June 2023, Sharon and Danny traveled with students and advisors from the Pennington School to the Dzaleka Refugee Camp. They got to see first-hand the effects of the students' innovation, visit the tailor shop where the WISSP pad is made, and personally deliver the 25 desks funded by by the firm, Sharon, and Danny. We continue to support the STEM students at the Pennington School and their innovative efforts to improve the world, starting with refugees in Malawi.