Students' Bank Loans Money to Start Businesses

A few hundred dollars is not enough money to start a business in most places. But in some poor countries that much money -- or even less -- can help a woman start a business that can give her a path out of poverty and change her family's life. The problem is that most banks will not loan money to low-income people. However, some banks, called *microbanks,* do give small loans to help low-income people start businesses.

Justin Blau, a student at The Meadows School in Las Vegas, Nevada, learned about microbanks as he was preparing for a school debate on health conditions in poor countries. Blau decided that microbanking is a good way to help people, so he started The Meadows School MicroBank. The bank will offer loans of several hundred dollars to poor women in Latin America. About 70 students have joined Blau's microbank project. So far, they have raised $25,000.

NEWS WORD BOX

business   debate
low-income   poverty
tortilla   participate

People say the Meadows' School MicroBank is the first bank of its type started by students in the U.S. With loans from the microbank, women can buy items such as a sewing machine, tortilla-making supplies, or a cow or chickens to help them make money. Loans can be used to buy all kinds of equipment and supplies or to improve health and education conditions.

MORE STUDENT SERVICE PROJECTS

- Students at Trent Lott Middle School in Pascagoula, Mississippi, participate in a different community service project each month. In September, students raised money for the local humane society. This month, they are collecting food for the needy and selling shirts to raise money to help injured veterans.
- Eighth graders at Villa Duchesne Middle School in St. Louis, Missouri, make small blankets for animals and donate them to the St. Louis Humane Society.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

All around the world, groups of students are making a difference in the live of others. Maybe you and your friends can take a few minutes to brainstorm ways in which you might make a difference.