

**FEATURE STORY**

Feb. 1, 2014 Contact: Ali Fingerhut

 Phone: 618-580-1842

 Email: afinger@siue.edu

**Take Off Your Shoes**

EDWARDSVILLE, Ill.–If you saw someone walking around without shoes, what would you think? Would you ask them why they did not have shoes? One Day Without Shoes is a day where people have an opportunity to spread awareness about the thousands of children that have to go without shoes their whole lives.

 The company that began One Day Without Shoes is a company called Toms, which stands for “shoes for tomorrow.” With every pair of shoes sold, Toms donates a pair to a child in need. One Day Without Shoes was created because Toms does not do any advertising, so they wanted a way to spread awareness. Anyone that wants to help Toms with their mission can go without

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shoes April 29. And when people ask, “Why aren’t you wearing shoe?” You can tell them what Toms does for children. Since the company started in 2006, it has donated more than 10 million pairs of shoes to needy children.

But there are many children that still need shoes, something many of us take for granted because we have always had them. Yet the unfortunate truth is, for many children around the world, footwear is a luxury they cannot afford.

Many children that live in the countries that Toms donates to could not attend school without shoes. Without shoes, they will continue the same vicious cycle; no shoes, no school, no money for a better life. Another sad fact is that the children that do not have shoes can be infected by parasites called Hookworms. These parasites can cause stunted growth, decreased cognitive development, anemia and chronic fatigue. If these children had footwear it would stop many of the problems they suffer from.

April 29 is your opportunity to help. Going without shoes for an entire day is an eye-opening experience. It can be scary because most people are used to having foot protection; when it is taken away suddenly you feel vulnerable and maybe even scared. Once the shoes are off it will be hard to not stare at the ground as you walk, watching out for potentially dangerous objects.

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But this is how millions of people live every day. So please kick off your shoes, just for the day, and help join the fight for those that live *Every Day* Without Shoes*.*

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