

# Rwandan to share her story

Teacher raises \$23,000 to bring massacre survivor, author to Wausau

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EDGAR — Last spring, Colin Hanson did something he knew was wrong. He judged a book by its cover.

The Edgar Elementary School teacher was drawn to the somber artwork of "Left to Tell," a story about a survivor of the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

He picked up the book, and the rest is history.

Hanson, 31, was so moved by survivor Immaculée Ilibagiza's story that he began a yearlong effort to bring her to central Wisconsin.

On May 20, she will share her story with the public at the Wausau East High School Auditorium, and the next day she will speak to nearly 1,800 students from 19 Wausau-area schools. The presentations are free for residents and the schools because of Hanson's efforts.

"It's a story that I think everybody should read," he said.

Ilibagiza was home from



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Edgar Elementary School teacher Colin Hanson said he was inspired after reading "Left to Tell."

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college for the Easter holiday in 1994 when the death of Rwanda's Hutu president began a three-month killing of almost 1 million Rwandans.

Hanson set out in August to raise nearly \$23,000 to book an appearance by Ilibagiza,



Immaculée Ilibagiza

calling nearly 75 groups and individuals for funding during his free time.

"Colin was told 'no' by more people than he was told 'yes,' but he kept going," said Joe Pachal,

a social studies teacher at Horace Mann Middle School in Wausau, who will oversee travel arrangements for the

visiting schools.

Hanson said there were times he thought he would not be able to raise the money.

"In the back of my mind, I didn't want to let the school districts down," he said. "I wanted to let kids hear this story."

Hanson's efforts show how much of an effect a single educator can have on the community, said Lou Ann Novak, public affairs director for Verizon, one of the first donors to contribute.