



KEEI Notes

The Newsletter of Kijana Educational Empowerment Initiative

Empowering Kenyan and American youth through school development projects and cultural exchange.

Volume I, Issue I March 2004

Kijana:

“Youth, or Young Person”
(In the Swahili language)

*A person is a person
through other persons.*
-Bantu proverb

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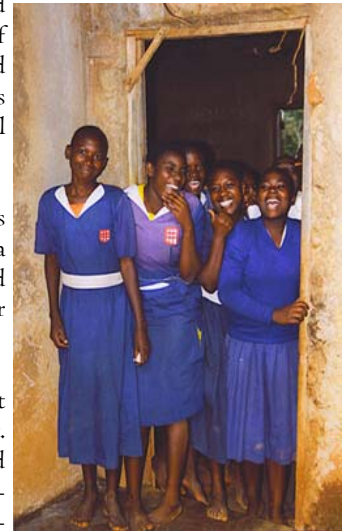
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Cookout For Kenya

On the sunny afternoon of Saturday, September 27, 2003, Kijana Educational Empowerment Initiative hosted its first Cookout For Kenya Fundraiser at the Gumbo Limbo pavilion of Carlin Park in Jupiter, Florida. 75 individuals joined the festivities to show their support for our efforts. Set in front of a backdrop of Kenyan tapestries and banana fiber artwork, recorded sounds of various African musicians drummed through the air. Curious visitors browsed through tables of Kenyan goods for sale. Selections included handcrafted note cards, artwork, and batiks. Thanks to the donations of *Nutrition S'Mart* of Palm Beach Gardens, raffle tickets were sold toward tempting prizes including a grand prize basket full of health and fitness goodies. Between raffle drawings, students from The Benjamin School engaged in a competitive games of volleyball and ultimate frisbee.

Near lunchtime, delicious smells drew the crowd back to the pavilion as Mireille and Jean, from *AfriCaribbean Authentic Cuisine*, prepared a lunch of traditional African foods. The crowd was treated to grilled chicken, Jollof rice, potato salad, fried plantains, fruit punch, and other tasty flavors.

Proud participants submitted their raised funds. Those who raised at least \$100 received a limited edition Cookout for Kenya T-shirt. Through the leadership of Ashlee Richman, Mercedes Anderson and their faculty club sponsor Anita Spassoff, The Benjamin School's National Honor Society provided a wealth of donations and time in volunteering to help facilitate our Cookout. We also especially thank The Benjamin School Student Council and Environmental Club for their part in our event's success. In all, our Cookout and Fall Fundraising Drive raised close to \$10,000 toward the efforts of this organization. We were glad to see so many eager supporters there and we look forward to seeing you again at our next event.



Excited Ebusiloli students

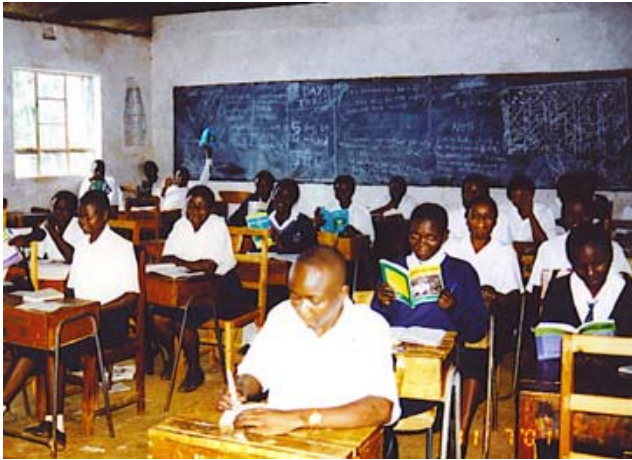
Our Inaugural Projects—Fall 2003

Kijana Educational Empowerment Initiative embarked upon its first projects in October - December of 2003 with money raised from the Cookout for Kenya. Our first fundraiser allowed us to work with four school communities to raise educational standards. President Jim Cummings was in Kenya at this time and oversaw

work at our flagship schools, Ebusiloli Secondary and Ebusiloli Primary and at Essaba Secondary and Essaba Primary. The money raised at the Cookout and fall fundraising drive enabled us to invest about \$10,000 and make dramatic improvements at the four schools. Most of the work was done at **Ebusi-**

Mission

Kijana Educational Empowerment Initiative, a non-profit organization, promotes and cultivates youth empowerment through educational development, cross-cultural dialogue, and sustainable and environmentally friendly economic growth, among rural Kenyan school communities and American school communities.



Ebusiloli students reading enthusiastically from new textbooks.



Ebusiloli Secondary Head, Naman Anjichi and Ebusiloli Primary Head, Wycliffe Olukoya walk through a refurbished primary school.



Essaba Primary School before the renovations.



A newly painted Essaba Primary School glows in the African sun.



Ben Asembo and assistant of Village Electrical, installing solar panel atop Essaba Secondary building, allowing school to harness free energy.



Eager students await distribution of thousands of tree seedlings to be planted locally.

Our Inaugural Projects—Fall 2003 continued

Ioli Primary- a school which has seen a huge influx of new students since the new government's free primary education program. We funded the addition of a completely new classroom and the renovation of another-replacing mud floors with cement and plastering the walls. We also financed walkways around all seventeen classrooms-bringing students their first opportunity to walk from classroom to classroom on cement-rather than exiting to dirt or mud. Almost 200 textbooks were purchased for student use, the schools gutter system for rainwater catchment was returned to working condition and all classrooms were repainted. Community members were most excited about the improvements. Many commented that the school no longer looks like a primary school, but appears to be a secondary school. We hope to purchase hundreds more textbooks soon-improving the textbook ratio significantly.

At **Ebusiloli Secondary**, we purchased science equipment for the school laboratory, repainted the entire school and with the H/M, designed a sidewalk system between classroom buildings- assisting the school in keeping the classrooms cleaner. Previously, no sidewalks between buildings existed, so students would track mud into the rooms whenever they went from building to building. Since water is a scarcity, classrooms are rarely fully cleaned and the dirt and dust accumulates. Our efforts are promoting a healthier classroom environment. We also repaired and refurbished the solar system- previously installed with monies raised by Benjamin student efforts. Furthermore, we refurbished the gutter systems for rainwater catchment, increasing the water collection capabilities.

At **Essaba Primary** we repainted the entire school-inside and out and

purchased over 130 storybooks and textbooks for classroom use. At **Essaba Secondary**, we updated the solar system, which like the systems at Ebusiloli had been funded by money raised by Benjamin students. Essaba Primary has a dramatic new look which members of the school and village community are very proud of. Work at all the schools provided much needed employment for members of both Essaba and Ebusiloli communities. They were ecstatic to have the work and allowed them a small amount of economic freedom or improved cash flow. In some cases, it gave them the opportunity to eat full meals day after day. Jim Cummings was conversing with a friend who told him that one of the painters said he was going to buy a kilo of unga (flour to make ugali). Jim responded that that didn't sound like something very special and asked how long that would last. His friend responded: "A few days, depending upon how many they are feeding," and added, "Jim, people go hungry here."

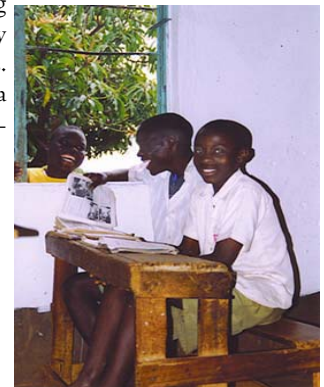
Our work and the fundraising efforts of all involved in the Cook-out helped students have access to more resources. Furthermore it inspired added pride in the schools and helped them learn in a cleaner environment. Additionally, it provided local employment and economic sustenance to people of the communities, allowing community members to feel pride in their work and come home and feed their families or add to the comforts of life - sustaining the community even further as the local economic circular flow expands.

Making Friends From Far Away



Kathleen Devine and her 8th grade advisees

18 students and one teacher at The Benjamin School are committed to making a connection with students in Kenya through Kijana Educational Empowerment Initiative. Mrs. Devine's 8th grade advisees have hosted three bake sales to raise funds toward their goal. They aim to purchase a television and a VCR for Ebusiloli Secondary and Primary Schools, which are supported by our organization. This acquisition will allow for more vivid communication between the two communities and make Ebusiloli the only village school in the region with that technology. It will also create the infrastructure for a video library that will be fostered through periodic shipments as well as local purchases of educational videos. In addition to raising funds, the students have been busy collecting photos and writing letters to tell their own story as well as to ask about the lives of young Kenyans. The first step to initiate the collection will be a student-filmed video letter that promises to become a tradition.



Ebusiloli students enjoying their newly repainted classroom.

The students first learned of this far away school while watching a video of Kenyan teacher Mr. Kutai, who was a visiting teacher at The Benjamin School thanks to our budding *kijana* project. In this video, Mr. Kutai answers questions about 'Things Fall Apart', a novel that this year's 8th grade just began reading. Impressed by the notion of just how far one U.S. dollar would stretch in the land of Kenya, they decided to do something. These students have raised nearly \$300 thus far and their future holds further bake sales.

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Making Friends From Far Away continued

Mrs. Devine appreciates the immediacy of this project. According to her, the students get instant feedback from our President, Jim Cummings as he personally delivers the funds and oversees their use. They are able to see what the money they raised is doing and are therefore able to realize that they do make a difference. Thus, the project serves a dual purpose as it teaches the students important lessons of the value of community service and international awareness while assisting well-deserving Kenyan students. Mrs. Devine appreciates that in the world after 9/11, our awareness of becoming more educated of the differences between the cultures and people of the world is that much more important than it used to be. Thank you to Mrs. Devine and her advisees!

Your contribution is making a fundamental difference on two continents.

Please visit our website for more information and photos of our recent activities.

**www.kijana.org
email: kijana@kijana.org**

Dear Kijana Educational Empowerment Initiative Contributors,

On behalf of my fellow students I wish to extend my sincere gratitude for what you have done for us. The clean pavements, re-carpeted floors, sparkling new paint, laboratory equipment and many other nice things really tell of your great love for our school. We believe we are going to work even harder in such an environment. Kindly accept our appreciation and God bless you very much.

-Rhina Ondiso (Student leader at Ebusiloli Secondary School)

Treat the world well. It was not given to you by your parents, it was lent to you by your children.
—Kenyan proverb



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