



KEEI NOTES

The Newsletter of Kijana Educational Empowerment Initiative

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

Fall 2009/ Issue XI

Kijana:

"Youth, or Young Person"



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

Board of Directors

- Mark Madison
Historian, U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Robert Gass
Project Officer, HIV/AIDS Care, Support, & Treatment, UNICEF
- Helga Ying
Director, Worldwide Government Affairs & Public Policy, Levi Strauss & Co.
- James P. Cummings
President and Founder
- Mary Ditaranto
English Teacher, The Benjamin School
- Stephanie Pew
Homemaker, Parent and Community Events Organizer
- Ben DeVries
President, DeVries Real Estate Counselors, Inc.

Officers

- James P. Cummings
President
- Bruce A. Huber
Vice President
- Sheryl Kittrell
Secretary
- Marisol Tejera-Mede
Treasurer

Positively Africa to return for 7th annual Cookout!

Our 7th annual **Cookout For Kenya** will be held on Sunday December 6th at Ocean Cay Park in Jupiter, FL from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. The event will feature live music by *Positively Africa* along with African style food, prepared by Valerie Schuster and her team of volunteers. *Positively Africa* is a local band led by Julius and Julia Sanna, originally of Kenya.

Julius Sanna, nominated for Best Artist in the Talenta award contest, will also lead students in a drumming lesson. Many pieces of Kenyan and African art will be auctioned and raffled off. We will have a huge selection of unique original hand-painted Tinga Tinga pieces from Zanzibar. Additionally Kenyan handicraft and jewelry will be for sale. Please help make this our largest and most festive cook-out yet! Tickets are \$15 for an individual, \$10 for a student, and \$35 for a family. Tickets are available at the event or through Sheryll Kittrell at The Benjamin School upper school office (561-626-3747 or skitrell@thebenjaminschool.org).



Julius Sanna, nominated for Best Artist in the Talenta award contest, will also lead students in a drumming lesson. Many pieces of Kenyan and African art will be auctioned and raffled off. We will have a huge selection of unique original hand-painted Tinga Tinga pieces from Zanzibar. Additionally Kenyan handicraft and jewelry will be for sale. Please help make this our largest and most festive cook-out yet! Tickets are \$15 for an individual, \$10 for a student, and \$35 for a family. Tickets are available at the event or through Sheryll Kittrell at The Benjamin School upper school office (561-626-3747 or skitrell@thebenjaminschool.org).

Kijana Team travels to Kenya over summer.

Last June several members of the local "Kijana" community travelled to Western Kenya to meet community members of the area we are assisting and see our progress. Kijana Board Members Jim Cummings, and Stephanie Pew were joined by Vice-President of Kijana Bruce Huber and Kijana Member Randy Doane and Benjamin School student members Dylan Pew and Bryan Doane. It was great opportunity to exchange ideas between the Florida Kijana members and the Kenyan school community. All parties thoroughly enjoyed the visit. We sponsored two major student expeditions for Ebusiloli and Mwituha students, to the Kakamega Forest and to the Masai Mara. A handful of Kenyan students and teachers joined the US Kijana team on both visits to learn more about Kenya's tremendous natural resources. Additionally, Dylan and Bryan spent time working with Ebusiloli students on a music project. Ebusiloli has a thriving music program partly inspired by the efforts of KEEI. The Doanes and Pews made an additional contribution with the gift of an electric guitar amplifier and VP and Benjamin music teacher Bruce Huber also donated a classical guitar. Furthermore Mr. Huber worked with students and teachers in building a new a new marimba to add to their repertoire of instruments. These gifts supplement the gift of a keyboard two years ago. We hope that this excursion was a small stepping stone toward future similar journeys to Kenya and within Kenya for Kenyan and American school community members.

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.

One of the things we discovered about Kenya was that our imagined impressions of Kenya were not valid. Yes, it is very populated and extremely poor, but Kenyans are determined to get ahead. We visited over 10 schools and had a wonderful welcome from each of them. Many of the schools even had welcoming ceremonies planned for us. The love and desire for an education was evident everywhere we went. When we went to Kakamega Forest and Masai Mara, students brought pens and notepads on their own initiative, in order to write down the information that the guides were giving so that they could tell their fellow students back at school. All in all, the trip to Kenya was a rewarding and eye opening experience. It is clear that Kijana's investment is paying off, because the schools have made remarkable progress since the project first began.

Dylan and Stephanie Pew



Ebusiloli sends second female student to University! Rhoda Musimbi awarded scholarship.

Ebusiloli Secondary School is very proud these days as the second female in school history has headed to University. Rhoda Musimbi left for university in early September to attend Kisii University College. At Kisii, she is one of approximately 1400 university students. Rhoda follows in the footsteps of Rhinah Ondiso who attended Nairobi University and is now a student at Arkansas Baptist College in Little Rock Arkansas. Rhoda, who is studying Business and Management, was part of a group of students who passed very highly on their KCSE exams in 2006 but not high enough for a scholarship. KEEI agreed to pay for Rhoda and several students to repeat their "senior" year. This gave them the opportunity to retake the exam. Rhoda improved her score significantly, earning a scholarship. At university, she is enjoying learning in a new environment and interacting with many new friends from different parts of Kenya. She is one of 5 children in her family. Two of her younger siblings are also studying at Ebusiloli Secondary School.

During her time at Ebusiloli, Rhoda witnessed much growth in the institution. When she began, there was no library, no bio-chemistry laboratory, no additional teachers house, as well as no school bus. The teachers house was built by KEEI and funded by Cara Scarola's fundraising efforts in 2007. Rhoda's favorite subjects were Mathematics and Physics and she enjoyed all her teachers. She is particularly grateful to Mr. Anjichi, the Headmaster, for making it possible for her to learn at the school by hiring her mother to work for reduced school fees. Rhoda says that the learning environment at the school is much improved since she began.



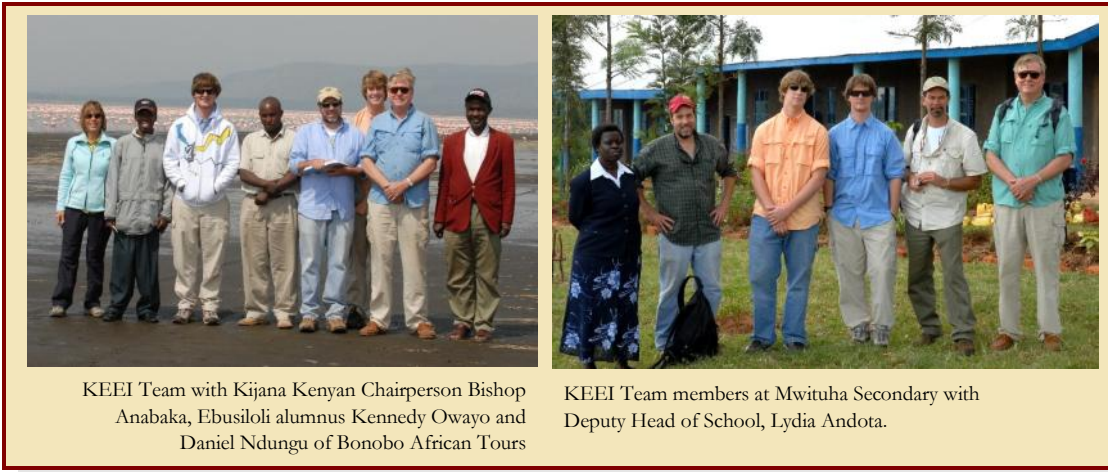
KEEI President Jim Cummings, Rhoda Musimbi holding admittance letter, and Ebusiloli H/M Naman Anjichi.

I am Rhoda Musimbi Mwanje. I reside in Emuhaya District. I studied at Ebusiloli Secondary school as from 2003 to 2007. Secondary education is what I had never dreamt of while I was still in primary school, due to financial constraints. This made my entry in high school to be a bit challenging, but because my Principal, Mr. Naman Anjichi, was humane, I was able to be admitted in form one (9th grade).

I had numerous problems, foremost being the problem of school fees. My parents were unable to raise enough money towards payment of my education, neither were they able to cater for the basic needs. Lack of food, clothing, just to mention a few, were some of the constraints in our family which made me and my siblings to nearly lose hope in academics. Lucky enough, my mother was called to work for fees in the school - which we survived on. I was able to sit for my K.C.S.E. examination in the year 2006 and attained an aggregate grade of (B-). Unfortunately, this could not give me a direct entry to the university, neither could I do anything with it just because nobody was in position to pay for my college education.

I thank God for the 'Kijana Organization' because it is through it that I could get another chance of sitting for the K.C.S.E. examination. All the money that was needed for fees including the registration fee was all paid by "Kijana." I was now able to get a mean grade of (B) plain which gave me a direct entry to the university. I know that this support that I was given is a stepping stone to a better future in my life and that in the willing of God, I will also be in a position to help those who are in need to have a better future. I would like to give great thanks to *Kijana Educational Empowerment Initiative* and all the contributors and members for their support to me. May God bless you all so much and make you to be in a position to offer a helping hand to others that are needy- just the way I was helped.

Rhoda



KEEI Team with Kijana Kenyan Chairperson Bishop Anabaka, Ebusiloli alumnus Kennedy Owayo and Daniel Ndungu of Bonobo African Tours

KEEI Team members at Mwituha Secondary with Deputy Head of School, Lydia Andota.

Ground broken on new library at Mwituha

We announced in the last newsletter that we were making plans for a new library at Mwituha Secondary School. We are pleased to announce that we have broken ground. A ceremony took place on September 16, 2009 and the foundation is now complete. The library will be one of the largest high school libraries in western Kenya- and one of the largest libraries for a small community school in Kenya as a whole. We are working with local architect and Mwituha teacher Jeremiah Awori to create a unique and productive design. We hope many of you will consider visiting Kenya next summer to join us for the Grand Opening ceremony. We have raised the funds for the basic construction of it but we need additional contributions to supply it with books and equipment. *Please consider making a special contribution to allow us to expeditiously fill the library with great books and supplies to facilitate the next generation of young Mwituha scholars' advancement.*



Kijana program officer Susan Okola Sipeche takes the lead in breaking ground.

Benjamin alums turn out for Kenyan Education Support Receptions

Following up on our successful inaugural receptions in West Palm Beach and San Francisco, we are working on broadening our network and support base with a series of **Kenyan Education Support Receptions** in the fall of 2009. We held events in New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Neenah, WI in October; and San Francisco, West Palm Beach and Little Rock AR in November. At the Chicago and Milwaukee events, Kenyan vocalist Kaz performed to the enthusiastic crowd. She helped us connect the audience to the creative musical artistry of Kenya. We increased our numbers of contributors significantly at these events. We hope to hold a series of additional receptions in the spring of 2010. We are grateful to all who have come out to the events, particularly many of the Benjamin School alumni, who have turned up to support the events. Special appreciation goes to James Bohnen of Chicago, who sponsored the *Kijana* Chicago and Milwaukee events allowing us to bring Kaz to perform. Additional appreciation is extended to the organizers in various cities: Adam Click in New York, Chris Shannon and Kate Cubitt in Chicago, Mr. & Mrs. James Cummings in Neenah,



Benjamin School alums at the New York event.



Benjamin School alums at the Chicago event.

Rhinah Ondiso & David Watterson in Little Rock, and Rachel Sadler, Michael Cummings, Kijana Board member Helga Ying, Jonah Levy, and Dawn and Sandy Margolin in San Francisco. We also extend our appreciation to Home World of West Palm Beach for hosting our Florida event.



Primary schools happy over new toilets

We continue to explore multi-faceted ways of improving the quality of life in our Kenyan school communities as well as to educate American students and school communities. Studies increasingly show that progress toward improved sanitation resources is one of the most significant elements in helping communities strengthen their health system. Inspired by requests for toilets, we constructed 20 new toilets at Ebukuya and Ebussamba schools. Additionally, we are in the process of exploring creative new sanitation methods, including eco-san toilets, which are more environmentally friendly and help to provide fertilizer for crops. They are being installed by a number of NGO's in developing nations, including some in Kenya and *Estamos*, in Mozambique. We extend our particular gratitude to Nancy Heffernan of Quincy, WA, who served as a volunteer in the area around these schools and her daughters Chelsea Heffernan and Jenna Greer of San Francisco, CA who raised the funds necessary to build these 20 toilets.



Kakamega Forest Article by Geoffrey Anyangu, Beverline Kusa and Robert Mandela

Our group was headed by Mr. Patrick who was a game ranger. He told us that the forest comprised of 250 species of butterflies and 450 species of snakes like the African rock python and the puff adder.



Robert, Beverline and Geoffrey

There were also about seven species of primate which included the blue, red-tailed, white and black and the colobus monkeys. Later on we were able to see the only species of antelope which was the smallest in the whole forest; blue dwigger the size of a rabbit.

At around 1:00 pm, we were shown different species of trees which included Elgon teak, the largest and tallest of them all, *Antiaris toxicaria*; known to be very poisonous, *Drucina fragrans*; taken by the locals as a herbal drug for curing prostate cancer and stomach upsets; sand paper tree which had hard and rough leaves like the carpenters sandpaper used for scraping off rough wooden surfaces and *Brurias Africanas*.

After that we were taken to Udo's camp where visitors could hire and stay at a minimum amount of 6 dollars, equivalent to 300 ksh per day. The camp had traditional huts which had modified bathrooms and were self-contained. We were then moved to the middle of the forest where they had a guest house which was also self-contained as the latter.



Beverline in the trees.

At around noon, we were taken to the highest point of the forest known as the tower where we were able to see the whole set of the forest in an aerial oblique manner. The forest extended up to the foot of the Nandi Hills. While still up there, we saw depressions of the quarry where people used to mine gold and murrum for gravelling on roads. We also took some photos of ourselves while on the tower.

Later on we went back to our starting point after thoroughly exhausting our walk in the forest. The distance back from the tower to our starting point was rather exhausting as it took us a walk of about 8km to and fro making most of our joints to ache to us who were not used to such distances but found it quite an exercise to our bodies.

At our departure we were greeted by a marvelous sight where the rulers, as we believed of the forest who were the baboons came and bade us goodbye. All along, the trip was marvelous and we appreciated a lot as we also had a chance to learn a lot. We thereby thank our sponsors KEEI on behalf of our school. They undertook to ensure that we had a most enjoyable day as we also look forward to having another day as that one we had, and as to end all is well that ends well.

Kijana Educational Empowerment Initiative

516 Gulf Road
North Palm Beach, FL 33408

Your contribution is making a fundamental difference on two continents.
Please visit our website for more information and photos of our activities.

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