



# KEEI NOTES

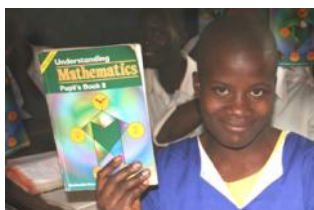
The Newsletter of Kijana Educational Empowerment Initiative

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

Summer 2010/ Issue XIII

## Kijana:

"Youth, or Young Person"  
(In the Swahili language)



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

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## *Ebukuya demonstrates solid academic improvement*

Students at Ebukuya Primary, one of the schools KEEI has partnered with over the past several years, have dramatically improved their scores on the national KCPE exam. The rise in scores is a reflection of the improved learning environment KEEI has helped create. Ebukuya Primary is fortunate to have two key international partners assisting it in its development, KEEI and a local Catholic Church community headed by Father Tom McGrath, originally from Ireland. The school community, along with the key partners, is creating a tripartite team which has transformed Ebukuya over the past several years.

Ebukuya Primary, previously one of the most dilapidated schools in the region, is leading the area now in academics and solid physical infrastructure. KEEI invested in a solar project at Ebukuya in 2005, constructed a borehole in 2006, built 8 new toilets in 2008, and this year built a kitchen for the school. Additionally, we purchased over 300 storybooks for their library this year and planted hundreds of trees in 2006 and 2009. The trees now create a solid boundary around the school and are beginning to provide nice shady areas for the students and teachers to enjoy. The Catholic Church community has fully refurbished the entire classroom block and constructed a library. The school has obtained funds through the Kenyan government's Constituency Development Fund to build additional classrooms.



Ebukuya Headmaster, Susan Jacktone, KEEI Officer, and Father Tom McGrath



All Kenyan Primary Students take a national exam at the end of Standard 8 (8<sup>th</sup> grade). Their performance on the exam determines their high school placement. We at KEEI believe that a school with strong leadership, academic resources, functional classrooms, clean water and acceptable sanitation facilities, inspires pride and can provide a school community with the physical, emotional, and academic tools necessary to transform a community.

## 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.

## Welcome to Small America

Monday June 14, 2010  
David Watterson

The first time Jim Cummings told me that there were students in Kenya that have to walk four hours round-trip to attend school every day, I lacked the life experience required to fully understand what he meant. I couldn't understand what would possess any kid my age to want to wake up every morning at 5am, head out the door by 6am, and walk for two hours to go to *school*, the twelve-year prison sentence slowly robbing me and my friends of our youth. "So why don't they build a school closer to where they live?", I asked incredulously. "Because they don't have enough money," Mr. Cummings, my high school social studies teacher replied.

I was a scrawny fourteen year old freshman at The Benjamin School, an expensive private school located in one of the wealthiest areas of the United States - northern Palm Beach County, Florida. Instead of a four hour round-trip walk, I was dropped off and picked up from school every day by my mom or dad in their leather-seated, air-conditioned luxury cars.

Ten years later, I stand in the middle of Mwituha Secondary School (right), the newest secondary school in western Kenya's Emuhaya Division. Opened in 2006, it will graduate its second Form IV (12th grade) class this November and has quickly established itself as one of the area's top schools. Growing from zero to two hundred students in five years, it currently ranks third out of sixteen in Emuhaya Division based on students' scores on Kenya's national standardized test and the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). Despite all its accomplishments, the school is best known throughout the area by its interesting nickname: "Small America".



The school's opening and growth has been an ongoing project of Kijana Educational Empowerment Initiative, my partner organization this summer. The organization was founded and is directed by Mr. Cummings, a former high school social studies teacher, who I now simply refer to as Jim. In the late 1980s, when Jim was roughly my age, he worked as a World Teach volunteer, teaching English for two years at a nearby secondary school called Ebusiloli, another school that Kijana now assists. As he got to learn more about his students, he found out that many of them were walking long distances to and from school every day, some as long as four hours round-trip. Their routinely strong attendance in class despite the arduous daily journey along hilly dirt paths and dilapidated tarmac roads made a lasting impression on Jim. Even if those students overcrowded his classrooms well past capacity, he appreciated the value that Kenyan youth placed on education.

Many of those students would have gone to Mwituha Secondary if it existed. For a long time, the Secondary school sat next to its companion Primary school, educating students from its nearby villages, miles away from Ebusiloli. In the mid-1980s, the Secondary school shut down, struggling with poor performance and lack of funds. For twenty years, the plot of land laid vacant, with brush growing up all around. The effect the school's absence had on the community lays largely untold. Jim's students that endured the long four hour journey to and from Ebusiloli everyday were actually the privileged few whose families both understood the importance of education and had the luxury to forfeit some of the valuable time their child would normally be spending doing important daily chores around the home.



When Jim launched Kijana in 2002, reopening Mwituha was high on his list of priorities. Once enough funding was in place, Kijana began by revitalizing the only structure still standing on the school's campus, two small classrooms that now hold the school's Form I and II students. Kijana continued by building two additional classrooms for Form III and IV students, a science laboratory (left), and an administration block for the school's faculty and staff. Meanwhile, Jim worked with Emuhaya's District Education Office to keep them in the loop with the school's progress, and when they saw how well the school was taking off, they contributed two classrooms of their own through a government agency, the Constituent Development Fund (CDF).

Receiving a tour from Susan Jactone Okola, a former student of Jim's from Ebusiloli who now serves as Kijana's Program Officer, I am amazed by the beauty of the school. A staple of every school Kijana has assisted is its impeccable lush landscaping, with grass on the ground, trees providing students with shade on their breaks, and a wide variety of plant life surrounding the classrooms and walkways. As students walk around campus, murals and motivational quotes also greet them and inspire them to strive for their best.

Kijana's latest addition to the school is underway - a large library (below) with a giant open reading room, a computer lab, additional classroom, and most interestingly, a large opening from the reading room looking out upon the open campus, where a performance stage and round stadium-style seating will be constructed as an outdoor amphitheater for use by the school and community. The library/theater combination has a unique design that I haven't seen anywhere else in western Kenya. The name of the architect is Jeremiah Awori, a modern day Renaissance Man, who closely oversees the construction of his plans from the classroom across campus where he serves as one of the school's teachers.

Jim has told me that he doesn't just want to build schools in Kenya, he wants to build *great schools*. Why shouldn't students in Kenya have the same access to opportunities that students in America have? Students at Mwituha will soon have a beautiful, well-equipped school in which they can experiment with science, explore the world through a comprehensive library and computer lab, and express themselves publicly through theater, art, and music. The projects Patrick and I have brought to the area are perfectly timed. Now that Mwituha has the essentials, classrooms with a roof to protect students from the wet season's daily rains, a full staff of teachers and administrators, our projects will go a long way toward making the school truly great. Patrick is helping the school identify a strategy to prepare students for the KCSE science exam, an area



that local students have struggled with. My project will engage students in four cross-cultural videoconferences with students from my high school in America, where from my own experience as a naive fourteen year old freshman there, I believe students will benefit just as much from the interaction as the Kenyan students.

Small America is flourishing. The nickname, which is reported to me with great pride by Mwituha's principal and teachers, is amusingly inspiring (I have told them that while we have many Little Italy's and Chinatowns in America, we do not yet have a Small Kenya). Small America, like it's larger counterpart across the Atlantic, is a land of opportunity. For the students, who have been given a *great* school. For the teachers and faculty, who now have meaningful and reliable employment. For the community, whose skills have been put to work to revive and construct this beautiful campus. And for teachers at Ebusiloli, who have seen their classroom sizes return to a more manageable level.

I find Mwituha's story to be incredibly inspiring. I consider myself an idealist, but as I think is common for anyone, it is sometimes easy to feel a sense of futility. ("There's so much need in the world....how could I possibly be making a difference?") Admittedly, I was recently feeling this way about Kijana. But when I took the tour of Mwituha and met all the students and faculty there, each one so enthusiastic and full of optimism, I quickly realized my foolishness for doubting the impact Kijana was making. This is an organization that in just eight years has made a considerable difference in the lives of hundreds of children, and has promoted healthy economic growth for communities here, hiring skilled workers to construct buildings, install electricity, dig wells, plant trees, and paint wall murals and maps. Experiencing Mwituha's success has reminded me of Margaret Mead's advice, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." The truth is, the only way Kijana can fail is if I (and others) lose our faith in it. The kids and teachers at Small America certainly haven't lost their faith. So I'm asking you, too, to put your faith in Kijana. I'm asking you to learn more about Kijana and to consider making a donation, by visiting their website at [www.kijana.org](http://www.kijana.org). Thank you for joining me, and thank you to everyone who has put their faith in me.

UPDATE: To see videos from Mwituha, including an interview with the Deputy Principal about the development of the school, and a tour of the library under construction with teacher/architect Jeremiah Awori, please go to <http://kijana.org/video.html>.



Students at Ebusiloli Primary School pose with Flat Stanley next to Kijana's logo

## *“Ripples of Hope” KEEI Inaugurates Global Student Summit Pilot Project*

We are proud to announce the commencement of our first yearlong **Global Student Summit**, involving 45 students from four global high schools- Ebusiloli, Essaba and Mwituha of Bunyore Kenya, and The Benjamin School, of Palm Beach Gardens, FL. The Summit, which has been a longtime goal of our organization leaders, is finally coming into implementation, through the impassioned leadership of Benjamin alumnus and Clinton School of Public Service Graduate Student David Watterson. Some years ago, Kijana President Jim Cummings and Board member Ben DeVries had brainstormed the skeleton of the Global Summit idea; however, we were unable to develop it due to lack of time and resources. Fortunately, David Watterson, a Clinton School graduate student, agreed to intern for KEEI to flesh out the idea and put it into action. The article below, “Reaching The Summit,” is a blog written by David at the conclusion of his summer internship.

### *Reaching The Summit*

Saturday July 31, 2010  
David Watterson

Three years ago, I climbed to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro. But yesterday, I reached a far more rewarding summit. After a nine week climb *creating* a summit - the Global Student Summit program for Kijana - I reached the top. The picture below is what it looked like.

It was a room at Es'saba Secondary School, containing thirty students - ten each from Es'saba, Ebusiloli, and Mwituha Secondary Schools - who have been selected to participate in the program's pilot campaign, "Water Sustainability: Finding Solutions to Fresh Water Scarcity," starting in September and running through May 2011.

The meeting was the Student Orientation, where they familiarized themselves with each other and received training to prepare them for the journey they are about to begin. While my nine-week climb to develop the program has just ended, their nine-*month* climb as participants in the program has just begun. Along with fifteen students from my high school, The Benjamin School in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, these students will become experts on the global water crisis and work together to promote some serious solutions within their communities, nations, and world. But their summit will reach a much higher peak than mine; they are taking their ideas to the top of the world - to two Presidents, a Prime Minister, two Members of Parliament, two Senators, one Congressman, and to the Secretary General of the United Nations. Together, these 45 students on opposite sides of the world will shine a very bright light on one of the most pressing - and most ignored - problems facing our global village in the 21st century.



During the orientation, each of the students received their own Participant Guide for the Water Sustainability campaign - beautifully printed in full color and spiral-bound - containing readings, reflection questions, and quotations to provoke their imaginations and inspire them to action.



One of those quotations I put in the guide is a favorite of mine from Robert F. Kennedy:

*"It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."*

- Robert F. Kennedy



Kijana President and Founder Jim Cummings was also present at the orientation, and he made sure to point that quotation out to the students. He asked one of the girls to stand up and read it out loud, and as I listened to her read those words for the first time with her unique Kenyan pronunciations and occasional reading struggles filling the silent room, I got goose bumps. To hear a young person encounter the words that I have cherished as a sort of Bible verse for public servants was like hearing it again for the first time myself. And somewhere, I know that RFK, the ultimate advocate and believer in the power of young people and the idea of "youth", was smiling.

Jim and I helped them understand what RFK meant, explaining to them that they are each sending forth their own tiny ripples of hope into the universe. Ripples of hope that would inspire others and one day, after crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, create a powerful tidal wave of hope. Amusingly, Jim even went so far as to

point out to the participants, that I am a student at the Clinton School of Public Service, a place named after a U.S. President who was born in a place called Hope. I picked up on it and explained, that I was inspired by the ripple of hope that President Clinton has sent forth in the world, and now I was passing it on to them, who I hope will then pass it on to others. At this point, the students were beginning to understand the ripple concept, so Jim drove it home by having the students say out loud: "I am a ripple of hope!," louder and louder until they couldn't help but burst out laughing. It was an incredible moment that I will never forget.

Although I used President Clinton in my ripple of hope example, the truth is that Jim is the greatest source of inspiration responsible for any ripples of hope that I have sent forth into the universe. I have known him for ten years now, and I can still remember the first time I met him at Cross Country practice a few days before I started ninth grade. I might not have been able to articulate it, but I knew from that first moment and from the way that he treated me as a young person that there was something different about him that other teachers and adults didn't possess. He has a true gift for teaching and a truly large heart for empowering youth and inspiring them to let their own light shine outward. I was reminded of that again yesterday as I watched him speak to the students at the Orientation, and seeing the smiles that spread across each of their faces. In particular, I have to share the picture above. Jim is pointing to his hat, and while apologizing for wearing it indoors, he explained that he chose to wear it to the Orientation for a good reason. The hat has a simple, but powerfully true message: "There is no Planet B." His point was clear; it's the responsibility of young people to protect Planet A, our most beautiful, wonderful home, Earth. It's been ten years, and I'm still learning from Jim, and still catching his ripples.



I was extremely pleased with how the Orientation went, and with how my entire project has gone, for that matter. After the session, I had the students go outside for some pictures. Each of them took an individual picture holding their name (see Everlyn's photo to the above), and then as a group. It was incredibly rewarding for me to see the camaraderie that was displayed as the students waited to take their pictures. Students from different schools who hadn't met each other until just two hours before were laughing and smiling and enjoying each others' presence. I'm hoping that a similar level of respect and friendship can be built between the Kenyan and American students when the videoconferences start in September. Although I won't be able to be there myself over the next nine months, I'll be following the students' progress with great interest and pride as they work on their own summit climb together.

## Kenyan Language Lesson

Kenya has hundreds of languages. Kenyan high school student graduates will know three languages upon graduation, English, Kiswahili and their 'mother tongue' or local language. Bunyore, a region in western Kenya, where virtually all of the schools we assist are located, is inhabited by Luhya people, who speak the Kinyore language. We want to share with you some basic Kinyore as well as Kiswahili. Greetings are very important in African cultures and languages. Here are a few basic greetings:

### English

Hello  
Good Morning  
How are you?  
I am fine  
Thank you  
Welcome  
Music

### Kiswahili

Jambo  
Habari za Asabuhi?  
Habari?  
nzuri, njema, salama  
Asante  
Karibu  
wimbo/muziko

### Kinyore

Mulembe  
Busiere  
Mulembe  
Mulembe muno  
Himbwo  
Karibu  
tsinyembo

Putting a sentence together!:

David plays good music. David anacheza wimbo nzuri. David asinanga tsinyembo tsindai muno.



Music at Ebusiloli Secondary.



## KEEI President meets with Kenyan Parliament Speaker Marende/ Ruth Chelagat meets Nancy Pelosi



A reflection of KEEI's growing stature and impact in Kenya, President Jim Cummings was invited on his recent trip to Kenya to meet with the Speaker of the Kenyan Parliament, Kenneth Marende, in his office in Nairobi. Speaker Marende was previously the MP for the Bunyore area, where KEEI does the vast majority of its work in Kenya. They met back in 2003, when Jim Cummings was in Kenya on sabbatical and working to establish "Kijana" on the Kenya side. Speaker Marende expressed his pleasure at the long term work of Kijana in Western Kenya. We are proud that our work is getting attention and intent on building lasting bonds with citizens and governmental leaders.

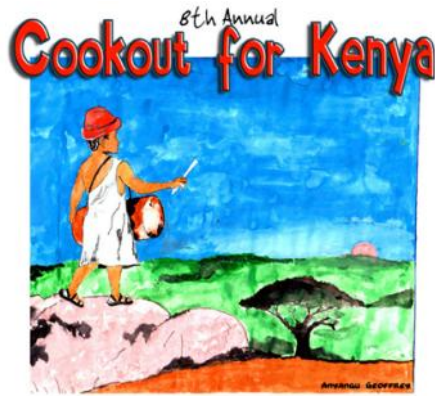
Meanwhile, in the summer of 2010, Kenyan college student Ruth Chelagat, who is studying in Little Rock, AR with former Ebusiloli student Rhinah Ondiso, had the opportunity to meet US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. Ruth was awarded an internship to work in Washington DC for Member of Congress Vic Snyder.

KEEI President Jim Cummings, through networking with long-time family friends and high school classmates, Carrie Pier Matson and Dan Pier, was instrumental in helping Ruth find a place to stay in Washington. Ruth stayed with Carolyn Bartholomew, who invited her in July to the Congressional Women's luncheon in Washington. At the luncheon Ruth met several members of Congress and was introduced at the luncheon as "a future President of Kenya."



Carolyn and Ruth in Washington DC.

## 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Cookout for Kenya



Poster design by Geoffrey Anyangu

African art and artifacts will be available for auction and sale. Tickets will be \$15 for individuals and \$35 for a family.

Please mark your calendars and join us for this event. Monies raised will help us continue to fund our programs in Kenya and the US. In addition it will help us purchase books for the new library.

**Positively Africa** just released their latest single, **Tanga**. It is available on iTunes. The group has been a central feature of the Cookout for several years. Please see their website at [PositivelyAfrica.com](http://PositivelyAfrica.com).

We are pleased to announce that the new library at Mwituha Secondary School, our major project over the course of the year, is almost functional. As described in recent newsletters, it will set a new standard for libraries in Kenyan schools. At present, we are finalizing the painting, windows and shelves and intend to supply the school with a starter supply of books to inspire further development. In January 2011, we expect to hold an inaugural ceremony to officially open the library. See our website for photos of the library development.

Our Annual Fundraiser- the **Cookout for Kenya** will be held on **November 21** this year from 1 -4 pm at Ocean Cay Park in Jupiter. Our 8<sup>th</sup> Cookout will have Kenyan/African style food as well as music by **Positively Africa**. Face painting will be done for the children. Kenyan and



Mwituha Library is nearing completion!

## Two Interns make big impact

*"How much do you think you really know if you've never left the shelter that your city, state, or country provides"* - Mircha Chad King

KEEI was fortunate to enjoy the services of two Clinton School of Public Service School Grad Students David Watterson and Patrick Banks during the summer of 2010. Each spent 9 weeks in western Kenya forging bonds with local families, communities and schools. David developed the foundational work for our upcoming pilot project - the Global Student Summit - an endeavor we hope will be an annual program. David's story of putting it into place is readable in "Reaching the Summit." Patrick worked with three local secondary schools (Ebusiloli, Essaba, and Mwituha) in helping the schools develop their science programs and analyzing for KEEI how to help the schools improve their capacity. Patrick, a former Teach for America teacher from St. Louis, MO, brought noted teaching experience and valuable proposals to the schools and KEEI.



Patrick & David with Ben Asembo & Bishop Charles Anabaka

Patrick's blog, "A Motherland Journey" is a penetrating collection to read. One of his many reflective blogs was entitled "Finding meaning in what you do." He uses the above quotation by Mircha Chad King to encourage us to reflect upon our visions of building a more open and understanding global society. Patrick was particularly impressed with the Mwituha school community. He spoke highly of the curious and observant student body. He noted how each week they have a discussion period after lunch in which students discuss current issues and ideas of the day. We are grateful to both of them for their work with us and for the schools in Kenya and to the Clinton School for Public Service for its pioneering internship program.

David's blog: [aguyinkenya.blogspot.com](http://aguyinkenya.blogspot.com)

Patrick's blog: [motherlandjourney.blogspot.com](http://motherlandjourney.blogspot.com)

## Continuing to build Kenyan -American bonds

During their summer experiences in Kenya, KEEI President Jim Cummings and Interns David Watterson and Patrick Banks had the privilege to attend the first annual Kaimosi Girls High School Alumni Reunion Day. The event was the brainchild of Kaimosi Girls Alumna and Clinton School Graduate Student Class of 2012, Shamim Okolloh and some of her fellow alums. Their attendance, the event itself, and the existence of the school are a reflection of the longstanding relationship between the United States and Kenya.

Kaimosi Girls School was founded in 1906 by American Quaker missionaries. The school is one of the oldest and best endowed schools in Western Kenya. Since its inception, it has been an all-girls school, and its graduates have gone on to be teachers, school heads, successful business people, and vibrant contributors to society. Phoebe Bukhalana, the Head of Essaba Secondary School, a Kijana assisted school, is an alum of Kaimosi Girls and was in attendance at the event. Over 1000 students attended, along with teaching staff, scores of alums (including one alum who graduated in 1936) and other visitors. Best teacher awards were given (another brainchild of Shamim), students performed dances and poems and alums told of their present activities to motivate the students. It was an uplifting day.

Shamim Okolloh, grew up in Nairobi, though her father was from Maseno in western Kenya. She attended Kaimosi Girls School. In 2005, she graduated from Spelman College in Atlanta, GA. with a degree in Environmental Science. In April, she was admitted to the Clinton School for Public Service to begin in the fall semester. While looking at the Clinton School website and reviewing the internship activities of its present students she discovered David and Patrick were interning for KEEI during the summer in western Kenya. A connection was forged. Shamim also spoke to Ebusiloli Secondary School students about building their resume's and ways to find post-secondary school opportunities.



Patrick Banks, Shamim Okolloh, and David Watterson

Since being in the United States, Shamim has raised money to fund a "Top-Notch student award" and Annual "best" teacher award for Kaimosi Girls. She has not forgotten her roots and seeks to use her education to improve the quality of life in Kenya. Shamim represents the longstanding partnership of our two nations. While in the United States, she contributed to the education of her peers by her knowledge of Kenyan society. Her hard work to fund her own education was an inspiration to her fellow peers. Her peers helped pay it back with assistance for her school in Kenya, founded by Americans.

KEEI is proud to continue to build on the tradition of American-Kenyan educational development forged by Quaker pioneers and thousands of other American pioneers in global partnership building. We have sponsored Kenyan educators to visit the US, have inspired numerous visits of Americans to Kenya, and have financed the birth of a new school (Mwituha) in Kenya. Presently we are pioneering a year long Global Student Summit between Kenyan and American students. We are happy to have found a new friend in our quest for a healthier, more productive and sustainable world.



### *Kijana Educational Empowerment Initiative*

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

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