



KEEI NOTES

The Newsletter of Kijana Educational Empowerment Initiative

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

Spring 2010/ Issue XII

Kijana

"Youth, or Young Person"



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

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Fall events lead to best fundraising year ever!

During the fall of 2009 KEEI embarked on a national campaign of growth which helped us end the year in our best fiscal position ever. A receptive audience in several cities made for successful *Kenyan Education Support Receptions* (KESR) in Chicago, Milwaukee, Neenah, WI, San Francisco, Little Rock, New York and West Palm Beach. Our season culminated with the 7th Annual *Cookout for Kenya* on Dec. 6th in Jupiter, FL. Local Kenyan musical group, *Positively Africa* performed for the third year in a row and Valerie Schuster and her team provided fantastic food for the 5th year in a row. Thanks to our generous sponsors—The Benjamin School, Stephanie and John Pew, Doane and Doane P.A, The Palm Beach Post, Imperial Frame Gallery, and others, we were once again able to inspire a fun community event.

The spring of 2010 brings even more growth news: we are planning a new **Cookout for Kenya** in Chicago— Sunday June 6, 2010 at Grove #4 of the Bemis Woods Division of the Cook County Forest Preserve. We look forward to seeing many of our Chicago area supporters at the first Chicago *Cookout for Kenya*. Additionally we are holding a Spring Raffle and our first Palm Beach Gardens KESR at the Capital Grille restaurant on May 26, 2010. See our website for details of all of these exciting fundraising events.



Partnership brings unique library to Mwituha.

KEEI proudly shares the continuing growth and development of Mwituha Secondary School—one of the more dramatic stories in 21st century Kenyan secondary school history. Progress continues on the new library at Mwituha, highlighted in our last newsletter and on our website. The library culminates a several year investment in Mwituha Secondary School—helping it rise from a collapsed and defunct state to one of the most promising new schools in the region. The library project represents the visions of KEEI Vice-President Bruce Huber and Mwituha teacher, Jeremiah Awori and others and exemplifies a “global partnership for development”- UN Millennium Development Goal #8. Hexagonally shaped, with a giant open hall for reading and studying, and an adjoined stage and amphitheater, the library may be a model for future school development in Kenya. A creative design, bridging academics and the arts, this project is a model of cooperative undertaking between thinkers of the developed and developing world. We hope it will serve as inspiration for future regional school architecture. The amphitheater will also provide an amazing venue for local artistic expression, which is an historic and crucial element of local Kenyan culture. Photos of the library under construction are on page 4. KEEI President, Jim Cummings, recently in Kenya, interviewed the chief architect Jeremiah Awori. His onsite interview with Mr. Awori is viewable on our website: www.kijana.org/video.

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 Primary academic scores improve dramatically!

One of the first two schools in which we invested has significantly improved their performance on the national exam scores. Ebusiloli Primary school is now among the top handful of schools—in terms of academic performance in Emuhaya district. Conversely, in 1998, Ebusiloli was among the lowest performing of more than 90 schools. In 2009, the school's Standard 8 students ranked among the top 10 schools in the 95 member district and among the top 5 schools in the 45 member division. After a decade of investments and support by KEEI and its predecessor, the Benjamin Cross-Country team Run-a-thon, our work is showing results. Ebusiloli is a testament to how sustained attention can pay off in the long



New teachers from left to right: Godfrey Omuga, social studies and math, Charles Okwachi, math and Kiswahili, and Jacktone Opanga, math and Kiswahili.



Students in class at Ebusiloli Primary School.

run. Since 1998, we have physically refurbished the entire school, bought books, and assisted a teacher to teach at the school. The improved academic environment at Ebusiloli Primary will help fuel improved academics at Ebusiloli Secondary as the primary school is the central source of students for the secondary school. We are in the process of continuing our investment with an infusion of books, restoration of the water system and hiring of three additional teachers to supplement those on staff. The school, like most primary and secondary schools in Kenya, is woefully understaffed. We expect that the additional teachers will help improve student performance further and look forward to reporting the results to you next year.

Volunteer inspires student field trips.

Cameron Schuster, Benjamin School '99, Loyola University, New Orleans '03, spent January to May in Western Kenya volunteering for KEEI. During this time he initiated and organized several field trips for high school students from Ebusiloli and Essaba to Kakamega Hospital. The trips helped students learn about health care and medicine and served as an introduction to the medical profession. He also organized a soccer tournament involving students from various area schools on April 24. Below is a letter from one of the students who participated in a trip to the hospital. Additional student letters and photos of the soccer tournament can be found on our website. We are

I will start by thanking Mr. Cameron Schuster together with Mr. James Cummings for the visit to Kakamega Provincial General Hospital. We learned the skills that are required to perform the many functions in a large hospital. We were glad, and full of joy. We were excited to receive the information, and listened with keen interest to all that was said to us. Many of the skills that we learned about were new to us. We enjoyed the day and the spirit of co-operation that we saw between the different departments. To our surprise we were treated to a free lunch - a bottle of soda, a banana, and two slices of bread with peanut butter, and jam. The meal was too delicious, and we enjoyed it much. Students were satisfied thanking Mr. Cameron for providing us lunch. We were actually happier than ever before during a school meal. Before we reached Kakamega we came upon a place called *Ilesi* that had a giant rock that they call the crying stone because it has permanent water marks coming down from it. This was extremely interesting, and some of us laughed until our ribs hurt. We enjoyed the day. We thank Kijana for the trip.

Kelvin Museva Form 1, Ebusiloli Secondary

grateful for Cameron's interest in volunteering in Western Kenya and his initiative in organizing these events. He has contributed significantly to our organizational advancement in Kenya.



Ebusiloli students at Kakamega Provincial General Hospital.

Ebusiloli Secondary School generates continued promise – Profiles in fortitude.

On his recent journey to Kenya, KEEI President Jim Cummings interviewed several Ebusiloli Secondary School students– to share their thoughts with the Global Outreach Club of The Benjamin School, in Palm Beach Gardens, FL. The following student profiles are just a few examples of the capable, curious and insightful students of Ebusiloli. We invite you to visit our website and *YouTube* for the full interviews and to see other students. We are sure you will be impressed with the seriousness, thoughtfulness, and character of these youth who are speaking in their third language and answering impromptu questions.

Ebusiloli Secondary School students speak out on education and their global concerns.



Lillian

Global concern: Political instability and leadership wrangles.

Favorite subject: Math and Business, Occupational goal: Bank Manager.

“We have these people who are just fighting to be leaders and yet they are forgetting that others behind them can be leaders”

“Rhinah [Ondiso] inspires me to work harder to improve the community.”



Mary

Global concern: Environmental conservation and climate change.

Favorite subject: English, Occupational goal: Journalist

“I’m urging that we should conserve our environment. Think about cutting down all our trees. It will be left a fallow land... I urge people to attempt to maintain our climate... I think out of the discussions at Copenhagen, there will be some change.”



James

Global concern: Nuclear Weapons.

Occupational goal: Fight for peace

James travels 15 km to school each day.



See additional responses from Luke, Lauren, Bettina, Kelvin, Joyce, Jack, Edward, Wycliffe, Christine, Henrika, Daniel, and other students on our website.

View all of our videos at www.kijana.org/video or search **KijanaEducational Channel** on YouTube.com

Clinton School Graduate Students to Intern for KEEI in summer.

We are pleased to announce that David Watterson and Patrick Banks will be spending ten weeks interning for us this summer. Students at the Clinton School for Public Service in Little Rock, AR, are required to conduct an international internship to earn an MA.

David, of Palm Beach Gardens, FL, will be helping us develop the framework and do the groundwork for an international model UN Summit between students of western Kenya and students in the US. With the UN Summit, we hope to contribute to inspiring a greater global partnership for development among the youth of the world.

Patrick, a former high school science teacher in the US, will be helping us develop science projects and assist in scientific resource development at the schools. We hope this will help lay the groundwork for future collaborative learning projects between Kenyan schools and US schools.

David represents the kind of long-term global commitment to development we are working hard to engender. A 2004 graduate of The Benjamin School, and 2007 graduate of Berklee College of Music, David was a member of a 2003 World Challenge Expedition to South Africa, in which he developed leadership and global awareness skills. In 2007, he served as a volunteer for KEEI in western Kenya, helping to assist in music education. He has served as a city year volunteer in Chicago for two years. We are grateful for young adults like him, and proud of his sustained commitment to create a stronger global community.

Our first **Spring Raffle**: Grand Prize is three nights at Disney’s Swan & Dolphin Resort. The drawing will be on May 26, 2010. See a list of all the prizes and ticket information at www.kijana.org/raffle.



Mwituha Library under construction February 2010. See our video tour of the campus and library at www.kijana.org/video

Spotlight On Success!

Rhinah Ondiso, recent Ebusiloli alum who is studying in U. S., awarded invitation and sponsorship to attend AAUW (American Association of University Women) conferences in Arkansas and Washington DC. April-June 2010.

Elphas Odango, KEEI sponsored student at Ebusiloli scored well enough to receive partial scholarship to Kenyan University system.

Kennedy Oywayo Otochi, recent Ebusiloli alum, admitted to Lynn University in Boca Raton, FL. He has been offered \$10,000 per year scholarship to attend.

KEEI sponsors Kenyan artist, **John Waiguru**, to demonstrate batik making at "Africa Day" event at St. Marks Episcopal school in Palm Beach Gardens, FL on March 26, 2010.

Construction has begun on a KEEI financed kitchen at **Ebukuya Primary School**. A groundbreaking ceremony was held in April 2010. Photos coming soon.

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