Mission...what we do
Provide education and support for Nairobi children living in poverty whose families are affected by HIV/AIDS so they can transform their lives.

Volunteer Travel Grant Adds New Dimension to Camp 2014

This year the camp program included the first ever Friends of Ngong Road Camp Volunteer Travel Grant Award Winner – Katelyn Pastick. Katelyn is a senior at the University of Minnesota, studying medicine and planning to enter medical school next fall. She was the person selected from five applicants for the new Volunteer Travel Grant award introduced this year.

The program is the brainchild of two of our first camp volunteers, Emily Gleason and Turner Cobden (photo at right). Both attended their first camp in August, 2008. They realized what a unique opportunity camp presented for two-way education by the camp volunteer experience with the volunteer educating the kids and the kids and staff educating the volunteer about Kenya and life in the slums.

Importance of volunteers
After attending several camps, it became clear to Emily and Turner, just how important non-Kenyan volunteer staff members were to the camp curriculum. Our Kenyan staff has now attended as many as eight camps, and run Saturday Program activities since 2007. Fresh ideas for education, games and other activities are hard to come by after that many sessions. In fact, we inventoried all the activities we have run in the camps since 2007 and reached an astounding 180 different activities, many run more than once. To Emily and Turner, it was obvious that new ideas from new volunteers were vital to keeping a fresh curriculum in our camp.

Identified need and solution
Additionally, the people with the time to attend camp in Kenya are often either college students, teachers, or retirees, not folks who necessarily have the financial resources to not only give up the time to be in camp, but also pay the costs for travel to Kenya.

Grant created interest
The program was a wonderful success this year. Without the grant in 2013, we had one volunteer able to attend camp. This year with the grant we had five excellent applicants.

Katelyn, our first ever award winner spent 21 days in Kenya and attended all four camps. She ran the science education sessions, building and erupting volcano’s in Senior Camp an exciting interactive learning session involving arts, geology and chemistry. She also contributed several “crazy games” ideas to the camps, assisted with the essay writing instructions, helped with team support and all the myriad duties “behind the scenes” to run a camp, a job which starts at 6 am and ends at midnight for 17 camping days.

Want to see more camp photos? Just go to NgongRoad.org and click on the Picasa button at the bottom of the page
Runner-up attended too

Equally as good, our runner-up applicant, Megan Fischer, a senior studying to be an elementary school teacher at St. Thomas University in St. Paul, was so well qualified that additional funding was found to provide assistance for her to attend Senior and Grammar camps. Megan ran the “My Friend, Inspiration, Teacher” essay-writing exercise in both camps, added additional game ideas and helped run the camp side by side with Katelyn.

Volunteers needed for Camp 2015

If you or someone you know has something to contribute to the camp curriculum, or has a strong desire to attend Camp 2015 as a volunteer, encourage them to apply for the 2015 Camp Volunteer Travel Award grant.

The entire board of Friends of Ngong Road thanks Emily, Turner, Katelyn and Megan for their fantastic contributions.

Ms. Arts and Crafts – an Amazing Camp Volunteer

Camp 2014 was blessed with the return of Margaret Pfeffer to our camp volunteer staff. This is the fourth camp that Margaret has attended and the kids were all so glad to see her.

Crafts are a real favorite at camp

Margaret is a retired schoolteacher from Edina. She is very interested in Arts and Crafts, making jewelry and weaving rugs at home. She brings all these skills to make the camp arts and crafts program one of the favorite camp activities for boys and girls alike.

Margaret not only figures out the projects which will be taught at camp, but provides most of the materials required to make not only a special project for 400 campers but also about 500 bracelets, necklaces or anklets during free time activities.

This year, Margaret was joined by her daughter, Karen, for Senior camp. Together, they taught the campers how to decorate and make kites, constructing over 200 different kites in our scheduled arts and crafts time at Senior Camp. Then they helped the kids make all kinds of individual projects during free time. It is a common sight to see grinning campers displaying a special “hand made by themselves” jewelry item as they wave goodbye at the end of camp.

The contribution to the joy and memories of camp as well as the dedication and financial and personal time donated to this effort is truly astounding. The kids all eagerly await the arrival of Ms. Arts and Crafts at our Ngong Road camp each year.

Camp Impressions . . .

By Megan Fischer

Asante was the first Swahili word I learned at Camp and is something I want to say to all of you with utmost sincerity. Thank you.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to meet some of the best dancers, owners of the most beautiful smiles, the sweetest and strongest hearts, the loudest cheerers, the fastest runners, and best Katie (a much loved game similar to dodge ball) players that I have, and may ever, meet.

Rather than write a camp report I would like to share my gratitude… this short piece is not enough. These children have taught me so much, inspired me, have loved me. And because of your donations I was able to spend the time at camp with them, each an individual and unique gift.
Megan, continued

Music seemed to always be playing, as the Kenyan sky echoed with cheers and joyful squeals as the kids ran, jumped and danced.

A memorable trip

As I drove away with the other volunteers at the end of Grammar Camp Maria, Karisa, and Boniface wished us farewell, mouthing the words “remember me”. I do not think I could ever forget and I hope I never forget these children that continue to pull on my heart.

When I see the color pink I think about how I made pink friendship bracelets [an extremely popular activity in Senior Camp] for Sheila and Jackie because their favorite color is pink, or how the first day I met Freshia she was wearing an outfit consisting of only the color pink. When I wash the dishes I think of the first time I met Maria and recall our friendship that started at the sink at Grammar Camp, or when I hear a song with a good beat I think about the dance moves Karisa would be sure to proudly share or the fun I had boogieing with Selena around the camp fire.

Asante for that

No, I will not forget. My days are continuously blessed by the memories of all the smiles. When I think of Africa, I think of your children... asante for that.

Camp Impressions . . .

by Katelyn Pastick

The first Wednesday in August, I had the privilege to embark on a life journey to Nairobi, Kenya for Friends of Ngong Road’s annual Summer Camp. It was not a trip meant to evangelize or alter the beliefs of those we met and became friends/acquaintances with, but was a trip to create the best, most fun camp experience for nearly four hundred 9-20 year olds.

Being able to see firsthand the environment in which the students of the program live and the obstacles they have overcome and are overcoming each and every day during the two home visits I completed was astonishing.

A truly supportive community

What was even more impressive was how the students rallied together to support each other as a cohesive community and family. One of the most memorable moments of camp that illustrated this was during Senior Camp. After several team games were played and a winner announced, the winning team began to dance and cheer. Within only a matter of seconds, all the other teams joined in the cheer. Watching all eight teams crowd the field and combine in their different colored t-shirts to form a rainbow of joy and spirit for nearly ten straight minutes was awe-inspiring and breathtaking.

The team and squad leaders of camp were never directly instructed to cheer for opposing teams, but the fact that they all did so willingly and readily, to me, speaks volumes about the students sponsored by Friends of Ngong Road.

Great kids!

I can readily say that the students sponsored by Friends of Ngong Road are without a doubt some of the most disciplined, talented, and inspiring individuals I have ever had the privilege to work alongside and learn from.

Watching teams in Leadership Camp try to construct the tallest balloon castle utilizing every resource available, or teams in Grammar Camp enthusiastically write pages upon pages about their best friends, inspirations or favorite teachers, or even the kids from Little Kids Camp eagerly ask questions about the different animals from the day trip to the Animal Orphanage, are all memories that I will live with and cherish for the rest of my life.

Thanks

As the recipient of the first ever travel grant, I cannot express my gratitude or thanks enough for this opportunity. To me, not only was camp full of fun activities/games, with a couple Swahili lessons thrown in, but it was also an incredible and eye-opening learning experience, one that I will never forget.
Notes from Paula

As the school years kicks off around the U.S., the tempo of activity picks up for most families. That happens for Friends of Ngong Road as well.

During the month of August, we conduct camp for about 375 students. We now hold four different camps: Leadership Camp (for camp counselors); Senior Camp (for students from 8th grade through Senior in high school); Grammar School Camp (for students from 3rd grade through 7th grade) and Little Kids Camp (for younger students). Each of these camp experiences is tailored to the children in attendance. This year we had six U.S. visitors assisting with one or more camps. By now you should have received letters talking about the wonderful time the students had in camp – it is truly the one time each year when they get to be kids!

In mid-September, two of our staff leaders arrived in the U.S. for a three-week visit. Naomi Kamanda was our first employee (hired even before Peter Ndungu). Naomi is 26-years-old and leads our Secondary School Program. Tunda Lepore is 29-years-old and leads our Primary School Program. Both of these young women have deep experience with the children in our program and were able to share their insights in meetings with sponsors and supporters at our many gatherings.

One of the things that is distinctive about Friends of Ngong Road is the role of volunteers. There are many examples of activities or processes or programs we operate today that were conceived and developed by volunteers. Two special volunteers - Emily Gleason and Turner Cobden – saw a need to create young leaders who have enough experience with camp that they can move into future camp leadership positions. They offered a $1,000 scholarship for someone to come and learn the role. Katelyn Pastick and Megan Fischer were selected and have written a story in this newsletter about their experiences. Congratulations and thank you to Emily and Turner!

A final note – we have been working to create a new program for students who graduate from high school and want to pursue post-secondary education. That program is taking shape – we’ll bring more updates about that in the next newsletter.

Sincere thanks for your ongoing faithful support.

President, Friends of Ngong Road

Meet Tunda Lepore, Primary Department Head, NRCA

Tunda is 29 years old from a polygamous Maasai family with three wives. She has fourteen brothers and sisters in total. She grew up in a small village in the Maasai area called Enaibellibel in the midst of the rich, beautiful and sometime cruel and biased cultural practices of the Maasai community. Being born female made her very vulnerable compared to a male child.

Today she is one of the few girls from the Maasai community who was never circumcised and escaped being married off at a young age.

Tunda is a university graduate with a degree in development studies and a master’s degree (earned recently) in international relations. Tunda joined Ngong Road Children Association in February 2010 as a volunteer caseworker as a way of giving back to the community. A year later she became a full-time caseworker, and was promoted to Department Head in 2012.

She says she has learnt a lot from the kids; they have become part of her life and given her life a different dimension. She believes education is the backbone of success for any individual and for the development of any country.
New experiences and training
Not only was this Naomi’s and Tunda’s first trip to the United States, it was also their first experience flying in an airplane. In addition to the time spent with Friends of Ngong Road, friends at the Annual Gatherings, they worked with the U.S.-based board and volunteers to enhance their skills in child advising and counseling, technology, planning, operations and development. We are thrilled at the willingness of our volunteers to assist our Kenyan staff in their ongoing growth and development for the benefit of the children in our program.

Program was interactive dialog
As in past years the Annual Gatherings included a formal program. This year featured an interactive dialogue between one of our board members and Naomi and Tunda, reflecting on their experience with the program in Nairobi as well as their own personal lives and educational journeys. In addition, friends gathered to show their support to the program and (in some locations) the opportunity to purchase handmade items created by HIV+ mothers of some of the children in our program.

Eight Annual Gatherings of Our Circles of Friends Held in 2014

Friends of Ngong Road held gatherings in seven locations in September and early October to learn about and celebrate another year of transforming the lives of children served by our program in Nairobi.

Featured guests from Kenya: Naomi and Tunda
This year two of our staff members, Naomi Kamanda (head of Secondary Department) and Tunda Lepore (head of Primary Department) traveled to the U.S. and visited Minneapolis/St. Paul and Walker in MN; St. Ansgar and Decorah in IA; Chicago, IL; and Milwaukee and Hayward in WI to meet friends and supporters of Friends of Ngong Road. An eighth gathering, without our Kenya visitors, (but with a visit from Paula) will occur in Seattle, WA in November.

2014 “Send a Kid to Camp” Campaign Was a Smash Success!
As you know, we ran a special “Send a Kid to Camp” fundraising campaign in May through July of this year. Our objective was to raise $20,000 to cover the cost of camp in 2014. Thanks to your support our total contributions were well past that! We are so delighted to have achieved such success in this campaign.

In August, over 350 children in Kenya experienced what they all call the best week of the year. They will have eaten well, escaped the confines of the slums in Nairobi and had their lives enriched with games, arts and crafts, and just plain fun. The $20,000+ we have raised covered it all!

Thank you for making it possible!

A New Way to Support Friends of Ngong Road

What is AmazonSmile?
AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support Friends of Ngong Road every time you shop at amazon.com. You’ll find the exact same low prices as usual at Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to Friends of Ngong Road. When you shop at Amazon.com using the AmazonSmile feature the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible purchases to Friends of Ngong Road at no cost to you.

How do I shop at AmazonSmile?
To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to AmazonSmile to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile.

How do I select Friends of Ngong Road as the charitable organization to support when shopping on AmazonSmile?
On your first visit to AmazonSmile, you need to select Friends of Ngong Road as the charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. Amazon will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make on AmazonSmile will result in a donation to Friends of Ngong Road at no incremental cost to you.
Letter From Nairobi
By Peter Ndungu
Executive Director

Dear Friends,

This has been a busy time here in Nairobi at Ngong Road Children Association.

Camp and especially the volunteers

Camp was once more an exciting time as usual. The volunteers from the U.S were awesome since each of them had work to do during Camp. Margaret and Karen helped to make kites; Megan did a role model essay. Ethan taught Frisbees which is a new game for Kenya and Katelyn did a science project about volcanoes. We had two NRCA board members who were also able to attend and participate together with the children, Robert and Edna.

At Grammar Camp Margaret and Karen, our two handicrafts experts from the US, helped the kids create journals and during the Little Kids Camp they taught bead work. During the Little Kids Camp the kids had a good time because we took them to the animal orphanage where they were able to see monkeys, zebras, lions and cheetahs. Megan and Katelyn helped the children write their essays during Grammar Camp.

What we have learnt as years go by is that it is very hard to get a good location where we can have Grammar Camp because the school locations we can afford are all government run and they are not well kept. We have therefore come up with a solution that come next year we will have the Grammar Camp out of Nairobi at Naivasha where we had the Seniors Camp. Naivasha was accommodative and we all were happy with the premises and the courtesy we were given. We appreciate Tom Gleason and Antony Kamau for working together very effectively in making sure that children had the best time during Camp.

Naomi and Tunda off to the USA

I am very happy that Naomi and Tunda will be visiting U.S.A this month. The things that I am happy that they will learn are, training opportunities from the U.S. board members that have been organized especially on leadership, seeing many of the sponsors and how they love the children that they sponsor as well as learning new cultures which I believe will be beneficial to them. It will be also a time that they will be able to talk about the children they so tirelessly and lovingly work with and share stories about the children and their work in Kenya. Naomi has an inspiring story since she is the first employee in the organization. Tunda, as a Maasai woman, has a background that is very interesting. I am sure that the sponsors will love to hear and share with them while they are in the U.S. I am therefore very happy that this time round they have the opportunity to come to the U.S.

I am eagerly waiting when they come back to Nairobi and the knowledge they will bring back to the rest of the organization.

Post-Secondary

Post-Secondary has been challenging to us but we are happy that we are almost over with making sure that the 2013 graduates all get enrolled to their different colleges. It has been a long journey in doing this and we have learnt a lot which we hope to implement next year when we have a bigger group of students graduating.

Thank you for all you do for us here in Nairobi.

Peter Ndungu
Executive Director, Ngong Road Children Association