

HAVERFORD

N E W S L E T T E R

Recent Graduate to Build Library, Study Center in Tanzania

TWENTY-FIVE CHILDREN, trying to study, huddled around a flickering kerosene lantern centered on a tiny kitchen table. "There needs to be a place for these kids," thought Carrie Oelberger, a 1999 Haverford graduate.

And there will be.

Oelberger has received the Samuel Huntington Public Service Award, which provides \$10,000 towards public service anywhere in the world. She will travel in the fall of 2000 to the Kibaya Village in Tanzania to build a dormitory, library, and study center for those underprivileged students.

This is not her first journey to Tanzania. In 1997 Oelberger taught in the Kibaya Village, a rural, impoverished farming community. "I wanted to travel abroad but didn't want to study abroad. I wanted to do something more related to teaching," she says.

During her stay in the village, she recognized the many needs of the underserved community and planned to return and supply the region with aid and educational opportunity.

However, she arrived back in the U.S. with a rare amoeba in her stomach, a product of living with a family that didn't boil their water completely. Her stomach condition has baffled American doctors. The parasite caused Oelberger significant pain and discomfort and has pre-



Carrie Oelberger '99



Carrie Oelberger '99 with two of her former students in Tanzania, Miraa (left) and Koinetti (right)

vented her from eating certain kinds of foods, especially sugar, fats and dairy products. "It's definitely inconvenient, but I'm learning to live with it. I can't let it paralyze me or else I couldn't do the things that I want to do," she says. She also contracted malaria while in the Kibaya Village.

Despite experiencing often debilitat-

ing health conditions, Oelberger remained committed to her dream and received medical clearance by her doctor to return to Tanzania. The Samuel Huntington Public Service Award afforded Oelberger the opportunity to realize her dreams for the people of the Kibaya Village much sooner than expected.

Oelberger has dedicated her summer to raising funds for the

public service project by creating a non-profit organization, a distinction that will improve fund raising by making donations tax-deductible. She is currently accepting donations and has collected used textbooks for grade six through college for the library and study center in Tanzania. She plans to start a business in Tanzania that will serve as a means of income with which to sustain her project.

To avoid offending the Tanzanians and

their tribal heritage, Oelberger checks all donated books for signs of inappropriate Western biases. "Looking through some old encyclopedias, I noticed that under 'savages' there are pictures of African people. I want to make sure that the books I receive as donations don't export a lot of our racism," she says.

That's a logical concern considering the topic of her senior thesis, the Carlisle Indian School. The Carlisle Indian School, started in 1879 by a well-intentioned general from the U.S. army, illustrated the difficulties of inter-cultural public service. Although a sincere attempt to educate Native American children, the school became a horrible symbol of oppression marred by beatings of those unwilling to part with their tribal heritage.

"I want to make sure that I don't misunderstand their culture. I don't want to hurt the people that I'm trying to help," she says.

Although it may take a few years, she will remain in Tanzania until the dormitory, library and study center are "fully functional and completely self-sufficient."