

Nourishing Minds

A Quarterly Newsletter published by the Jifunze Project

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The Jifunze Project works alongside individuals living in under-served parts of rural Tanzania to help them create innovative, empowering and sustainable educational opportunities that will expand their possibilities for livelihood and enrich their lives.

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A Round of Applause for ELC Members



ELC Students in costume for one of the celebration's skits

On November 21st the Early Learning Center marked the successful end of its first full year of operation with a festive celebration for students, teachers and guests. The CERC overflowed with young children, tiny shoes, and plenty of applause, as ELC students performed skits,

songs and dances to show what they've learned at the Center during the past year. The celebration offered praise to the children for their hard work and challenged the invited guests, including representatives of the District Education Office, to recommit to improving early education in Kibaya.

The ELC program, which has blossomed over the past year, has been a valuable resource for both students and their teachers. There are over 200 members from five local kindergartens who, accompanied by their teachers, attend the CERC weekly. While members enjoy the wealth of age-appropriate resources including stories, books, puzzles and games, the ELC Coordinator, Christina Gabriel, is able to model innovative teaching techniques for the benefit of the local kindergarten teachers.

Working alongside the classroom teachers, Christina teaches the children mathematics and science through the use of manipulatives and songs. Additionally she leads them in games that teach road safety and helps them complete art projects using locally available materials. Each class also includes a short English lesson taught by Ms. Gabriel and a Jifunze intern.



ELC Students pose outside near the playground before the celebration

In addition to celebrating the conclusion of a very successful year of ELC programming, we have also committed to continuing to promote the benefits of our ELC program throughout Kiteto. In Kibaya, early childhood education is still viewed skeptically by many parents in the community and although it is gradually gaining broader acceptance, we must continue to demonstrate the enormous difference education can make in the lives of Kiteto's young children.

Seedlings Take Root in CERC's Garden

Ideas are blooming everywhere as this year's plans for the educational garden take root. The CERC garden committee hopes to continue to expand the utility of the garden by extending the tradition of sowing a mixture of experimental crops and local favorites. The experimental crops provide opportunities for members and staff to learn about new plant varieties, while local favorites provide a consistent yield and a solid base for financial sustainability.



A papaya tree flourishes in the educational garden

Excitingly, this year the garden committee's endeavors will be assisted by the completion of a pipeline between the district water supply and the CERC water tank. The pipeline will ensure that the garden receives sufficient water -- even in the dry season. It will allow us to take full advantage of the drip irrigation system installed last year.

Upon completion of the pipeline, the Garden Committee has decided to plant the first fruit trees in the garden. The trees, including mango, orange, avocado and even cashew, are expected to be an excellent source of additional income for the Center. They will complement the unique selection of spices and medicinal plants that currently attracts community members to our garden. As with all of our popular produce, we aim both to encourage community members to purchase produce and to educate them about ways to grow similar crops on their own farms.

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VSO Partnership Assists Capacity-Building

Through our growing partnership with VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) Jifunze has been able to continue making significant progress towards our goal of CERC sustainability. VSO's role in this process has been to provide extensive support in the form of two highly-skilled IT volunteers, Patricia Gathua and David Cruickshank. Patricia, who has been with Jifunze since October 2004, was joined by David in October 2005. They now work together to train the CERC staff with the computer skills vital for achieving self-sufficiency.



David teaches CERC staff members hardware troubleshooting techniques

During the final quarter of 2005, computer training intensified as the CERC staff spent ten hours per week in both software and hardware classes. Using her extensive software experience, Patricia led CERC staff in courses covering basic computing skills and Microsoft Word, while she also improved their competence with the CERC's library database. To complement the software classes, David trained staff members on hardware maintenance and repair. Together the courses provided CERC staff members with the knowledge they need to keep the Center's IT resources operational.

Jifunze is extremely grateful for VSO's support in recruiting and selecting such excellent interns for the Jifunze Project. We are thrilled to have the ability to provide onsite computer training for CERC staff, as it will certainly increase the CERC's IT capacity in the years to come. We look forward to our continuing partnership with VSO and as we both move towards CERC self sufficiency.

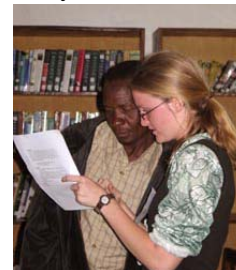
Volunteer Spotlight - Tara

Tara Mulqueen, our English as a Second Language (ESL) specialist and one of Jifunze's longest-serving volunteers, will depart Kibaya in late January 2006. She has contributed countless hours to the Center in her fifteen months with Jifunze and we appreciate all of her exceptional work.

Shortly after opening, the CERC was overwhelmed with requests from members of all ages to help them to learn English. Since her arrival in September 2004, Tara has worked to meet this need, collaborating with CERC staff to develop the Center's ESL program and to build the staff's English language skills.

When she first joined us, Tara worked to gain a thorough understanding of members' diverse needs and abilities. By teaching a series of ESL classes for members of the Center's Kindergarten, Primary, Secondary and Adult Rooms, Tara was able to develop the program's structure and content. She then designed a program to meet the specific needs of all CERC members.

Building on the knowledge base that Tara compiled, the CERC began a series of intensive ESL seminars for local primary school teachers beginning in early 2005. These seminars enhanced the program's impact and allowed us to utilize Tara's expertise to increase the ESL proficiency of Kibaya's school teachers. This has increased the quality of English instruction for all primary school students in Kibaya, regardless of CERC membership. The program received high praise from the teachers who participated and we aim to continue these seminars throughout 2006.



Tara assisting a primary school teacher during the November seminar

In addition to teaching ESL, Tara has been involved in a variety of other projects including: writing and editing articles for the quarterly newsletter, supporting the development of the Center's educational garden and collaborating with CERC teachers to design Saturday Programs.

Tara is leaving to pursue further studies at New York University. She will be deeply missed by the staff members and students in Kibaya. We wish her all the best and say *tutaonana* ("until we meet again") rather than goodbye, in hopes that, someday, her path will bring her back to Kibaya!

Donor Spotlight: Avery Dennison



Since November of 2001 the Jifunze Project has greatly benefited from two generous in-kind donations from the Avery Dennison Company. Avery Dennison, based in Holliston, Massachusetts, manufactures a large range of stationary supplies for home and office use.

In both 2001 and 2002, Avery Dennison donated a total of three shipping palettes full of supplies to be utilized in our U.S. office. These supplies, which included: pens, highlighters, binders, glue, reams of printer paper, mailing labels, and much more, have enabled us to keep the cost of running Jifunze's U.S. office to a minimum and have allowed us to spend the bulk of our budget on our innovative programming.