

The Sing'isi After-School Program

Caitlin O'Connor & Ashley Mott
Wheaton College, 2007
Project for Peace

Contact Information:

oconnor_caitlin@wheatoncollege.edu
mott_ashley@wheatoncollege.edu

Program Objectives:

In Sing'isi Village, Tanzania, an after-school program has been established by a community initiative. Together, Mr. Thompson Akyoo and Mr. Gebriel Williams have combined their visions to create a program that serves the children of Tengeru, Patandi, and Sing'isi Villages. These villages are shantytown settlements that have grown up on the periphery of one of the most developed urban centers in the country, Arusha. They lack basic infrastructural facilities and also, unlike many rural villages, have minimal land on which residents can be self-sustaining as farmers and herders. Education in Tanzania is inadequate given overcrowded and undersupplied classrooms. The impoverishment in these villages is almost inescapable.

Presently, the program is in the home of Mr. Akyoo where space is limited and resources scarce. Mr. Williams, a teacher at the Arusha International School, has volunteered his time and efforts to teach for the Sing'isi After-School Program. Our mission is to expand, promote and sustain the present after-school program. The short-term goals of this project are to: 1.) Build a classroom to serve the current students and community 2.) Provide English learning materials and Art supplies to build the curriculum 3.) Create a cross-cultural pen-pal program in association with the Nantucket Boys and Girls Club 4.) Develop a post-card and greeting card program with students to ensure economic sustainability.

Description:

One of the initial steps in developing the Sing'isi Village After-School Program is constructing the classroom. The structure will be built on a parcel of land owned by the Akyoo family with a one-month time frame for construction. During this period, we plan to expand upon the present curriculum and develop connections in the community with the support and knowledge of both Thompson and Gebriel. Given the classroom holds only 35 children, we plan to create two groups of students. One group will attend Mondays and Wednesdays and the other, Tuesdays and Thursdays. The current students in the program will continue their involvement while the expansion will focus on incorporating children from different strata of society. Through integrating the community's children, we hope to foster relationships where none previously existed. The two-part structure of the Sing'isi After-School Program will allow for more children to enroll while still ensuring that class size remains small and attention is paid to every student. The curriculum will be furthered upon the introduction of a pen-pal exchange and art program.

We will continue to support the English classes with much needed supplies and learning materials while also creating a cross-cultural pen pal program with the Nantucket Boys and Girls Club. The connection with the Boys and Girls Club has been established. Each student from The Sing'isi After-School Program will be paired with a child from The Club. At Tengeru Internet Café, students in the program will gain access to their pen pals through an email account. Furthermore, students will have access to discussion boards and picture exchanges on The HatchFlight Foundation website, maintained by Brendan Lawlor. This aspect is valuable as it allows students to use their English while

simultaneously gaining computer skills. For the children at The Nantucket Boys and Girls Club the opportunity to develop a friendship in Tanzania creates avenues for global understanding and an appreciation for the resources available to them.

The Sing'isi After- School Program will provide children with art projects complete with supplies to help enrich their creative spirits and lives. Through a relationship with Nantucket Island School of Design and the Arts (NISDA), The Nantucket Boys and Girls Club and The Wheaton College Bookstore, the children's artwork will be displayed to both educate and generate funds to be directed back to The Sing'isi After-School Program. The bookstore has agreed to sell the cards in packages of ten for \$10 each. NISDA and The Nantucket Boys and Girls Club have agreed to provide space for larger works of art to be showcased and purchased. The Project for Peace grant will provide needed funds for the first two developing years. After these two years, the benefit art shows and card sales will have generated enough proceeds to sustain the school.

While in Tanzania this summer, our role will be to coordinate and organize the program. We will support Thompson and Gebriel in their vision to provide quality education free of charge, and help to develop linkages to the Community Development Officer in the district, Sofia Mnyambi Simba and also NGOs in the US who could possibly provide capacity building support to further the project. Upon our return in August, we will be responsible for promoting the art and postcards to the organizations listed above. Our role in the program will remain vital over the next year as we foster the relationships needed to sustain the school. The cost of running the program for one year is \$500. Project for Peace will provide the supplies through the summer of 2008 after which the income generated from the card sales will sustain the program.

Significance:

The Sing'isi After-School Program will serve the communities, providing children with the educational opportunities necessary to reach their full potential. In building a peaceful world, the importance of inspiring children to be motivated and involved global citizens cultivates a future of peace. Through education, cultural learning and art, the program will instill values of peace. Mahatma Gandhi, one of the world's greatest peacemakers once said, "Poverty is the worst form of violence" and through education children can escape the injustices of poverty. English, as the language of commerce and higher education in Tanzania, is essential for this movement. In creating a space where children have the opportunity to learn, and the hope to overcome their present life circumstances, the Sing'isi After-School Program makes the first steps towards peace.

The introduction of art classes and pen-pal correspondences to the Sing'isi After-School Program serves four purposes: 1.) Gives children a direct role in financially supporting their school and the ability to create change in their community. 2.) Exposes children to visual arts to inspire their imagination and contribute to a positive emotional and intellectual development. 3.) Spreads cultural awareness in the United States through the display of art and the cultural exchange program thus 4). helping to create understanding between a peaceful youth generation with a shared vision. The pen pal program will promote cross-cultural relationships working to counter the divides and prejudices that are a major opponent to peace. Furthermore, the program will give children the opportunity to relate to one another despite their cultural, social and economic differences. In developing a global community built on tenants of peace, future generations will view each other with humanity. Through fostering education and multicultural understanding, children hold the promise for generations of peace.