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# Lamorinda Schools

Lafayette Elementary • Los Perales • Miramonte • Orinda Academy • Orinda Intermediate • Saklan Valley School • Sleepy Hollow • Springhill • Stanley Middle • Wagner Ranch

## Orinda Teens Work Hard To Help Kenyan Students

By Cathy Tyson



Alex and Katy with their 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls' AIDS class at Jora Primary  
Photos provided

This summer six Orinda teenagers had the adventure of a lifetime. The current and former students of Miramonte are members of the ABE Club – A Better Education, whose goal is to improve the lives of students in the Mt. Kasigau area of

Van Rheenan, along with chaperones Liz Reed, Kathy Macbride and Steve Isaacs spent a good portion of their summer vacation working at five villages near Kasigau, located in the southeast corner of Kenya, about 65 miles from Mombasa.

taught classes on AIDS awareness, English letter writing, and ecology. Mindful of the being culturally sensitive, the students made lesson plans that wouldn't impinge on local teachers' curriculum.

The ecology class was a big hit. Almost all of the Kenyan students had never seen a movie or television before, so after they carefully hooked the projector up to their car battery, the crowded classroom was transfixed. J.J. Reed, a junior, turned out to be the electrician of the group. "Deep Blue" and "Deep Sea" were projected on white butcher paper taped to the wall. Although only an hour and a half from the Indian Ocean, none of the village children had ever actually seen an ocean. The Orinda students related the ocean habitat to the Kenyan forest habitat, and set up lessons to be interactive. "I think they made a big impression," says chaperone Kathy Macbride.

In speaking about his personal experience, J.J. Reed said, "It's so different there. The kids are so happy, energetic. They have a great quality of life – even without running water or electricity. They don't have pressure, there's no race to be the best. Here it's all about your stuff."



JJ and Emily enjoy the 6th and 7th graders while teaching them about writing a letter to a possible sponsor

Kenya, by teaching, improving the community and by finding sponsors to pay school fees. Alex and Megan Isaacs, Katy and J.J. Reed, Emily Myers, and Shelby

This was not the first trip for most of the students; many have been members since the club was founded in 2004. From July 3 through the 31, these suburban teens

## New SMC Students Tackle Weighty Subjects at Orientation

By Jennifer Wake

Unlike many other college orientation programs, where the discussion might revolve around the location of the dining halls or hours of operation at the campus gymnasium, when students arrive at Saint Mary's College this weekend, they will have their first Collegiate Seminar discussion on Plato's Analogy of the Cave.

"Starting the course as a part of the orientation events sets the tone for the academic journey that the freshman are commencing," said Charles Hamaker, director of the Collegiate Seminar program. The Seminar course is at the core of a Saint Mary's undergraduate education and is required of all its students.

In addition, all incoming students were asked to read two documents as part of a Summer Reading Program before the start of classes. They were a paper by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability," and a statement by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops entitled, "Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dia-

logue, Prudence, and the Common Good."

"The Summer Reading Program ties in with Seminar in that a response to any serious issue like global warming requires the capacity to interpret the facts, assess their significance, and form measured judgments, as well as recognizing the longstanding ideas and questions about the human condition that provide the context for such issues," Hamaker said.

Dean of the School of Liberal Arts Steve Woolpert explained that these original readings were chosen "in order to inform our new students about the scientific, economic, and moral dimensions of global warming."

Students are engaged in questions about the works in an online blog, such as: Can you describe the expected impacts of human-induced climate change over the next 50 years? Are technological approaches more or less important than changes in people's values and patterns of behavior? What responsibilities, if any, do countries that produce the most greenhouse gases have to mitigate the effects of climate change experi-



De La Salle statue at Saint Mary's College  
Photo by Andy Scheck

enced by countries that produce the least greenhouse gases?

Climate change will be an integrative theme in the 2007-08 academic year including English Composition writing assignments, and on-campus presentations on climate change by experts and public officials. Saint Mary's also plans to join in "Focus the Nation," an educational initiative that will culminate in national symposia on climate change. The events will be held simultaneously at over a thousand colleges, universities, high schools and other institutions across the country in January.

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