

W&L Students Receive \$10,000 Grants from KWD 100 Projects For Peace

Two W&L students received \$10,000 grants from KWD 100 Projects for Peace to undertake summer community development projects abroad. These grants were made possible by Kathryn Wasserman Davis, an accomplished internationalist and philanthropist upon the occasion of her 100th birthday in February of 2007. Mrs. Davis, mother of Shelby M.C. Davis who funds the Davis UWC Scholars Program, chose to celebrate by committing \$1 million for one hundred Projects for Peace. "I want to use my 100th birthday to help young people launch some immediate initiatives – things that they can do during the summer of 2007 – that will bring new thinking to the prospects of peace in the world," says Mrs. Davis. Below are excerpts from their final reports to the Foundation.

Anne Gleason '07, in Sri Lanka



For the purposes of this project, peace is defined as a sense of wellness, both social and physical, in which stressors on the community, family, and individual are reduced and healthy growth is facilitated. The Healthy Community Curry Kitchen (HCKK) has immense potential for fostering peace, as its goals will be pursued for a minimum of two years. Stress on families—particularly breadwinners—is expected to be reduced through the provision of daily lunches that also promote bodily and intellectual growth in children.. Finally, the HCKK will foster invaluable personal ties between community members, school

staff, and local officials.

The project is located at the WP/H Niggaha School in Bulathsinhala, Sri Lanka, which provides the venue for the program's daily school lunch and monthly Community Health Outreach. In a rural area of Kalutara District, Niggaha is a small community in which most adults work on tea and rubber plantations; the Niggaha School educates about 45 children in grades one through eight. The community faces many health problems associated with poverty and rural areas such as dengue fever, malaria, various infections, and poor dental health. Furthermore, access to fresh fruit and vegetables is rare, families are often unable to afford nutrient rich foods, and children rarely receive lunch after school.

The HCKK aims to assist this community by reducing food insecurity, improving overall community health, and building community solidarity. On the most basic level, the HCKK will provide one nutritious, reliable meal each day for the school children and once monthly for the entire community. Each meal consists of red rice, two curries (protein and vegetable), a salad of local greens, fruit, and boiled water. Including all expenses, each plate costs 30 Rupees or approximately \$0.28. Originally, a weekly community meal was proposed, but daily lunches for school children were deemed more appropriate. Food will be purchased locally if possible.

As originally intended, the HCKK will address iron, iodine and vitamin A deficiencies by serving locally available foods rich in these micronutrients and encouraging the community to use similar ingredients at home. The children will be continuously encouraged to practice good hand washing, and sanitation standards will be strictly enforced in the kitchen. Health education, occurring monthly during the Community Health Outreach, includes topics deemed relevant by community

members in conjunction with the local Ministry of Health.

Although the supervisory board includes local officials and myself, community members staff the kitchen and control its daily functioning. Through this process, we hope that greater bonds will be formed between community members and that they will take pride in their work, capability, and themselves.

HCKK is that extreme adaptability is necessary for this type of project to succeed. Furthermore, the Niggaha community has inspired me to see potential, rather than the need. This project is a success only because the community immediately took ownership of it, and the Healthy Community Curry Kitchen became our common vision.

Sally Logan Gibson '08, in Rwanda

This past summer, I worked to set up a library in collaboration with the Rwanda School Project. Rwanda is currently building the first public library in the country—which will be located in the capital, Kigali. Ultimately, the Rwanda School Project hopes to make its Rwamagana library available several times a week as a reading room for the community at large—making it the second public library in all of Rwanda.

Rwanda is a nation in recovery. In 1994, the international community stood by in silence as genocide erupted within the country—eclipsing the lives of about 800,000 people in less than 100 days. Twelve years after the genocide, resilient Rwandans are still piecing together their lives—Hutu living alongside Tutsi once again. The government-led



Logan walking with young friends in Rwamagana

reconciliation process is in full swing and the economy is in steady recovery. Yet, peace from the top-down is all too often ephemeral. A heartier, more substantial harmony must be cultivated at the grassroots level through education and community organization.

Captivated by Rwanda's peace and reconciliation process, I spent my free hours devouring books on the subject and found to my surprise that Rwandans were willing to speak intimately about what had happened. I traveled to Arusha, Tanzania to observe the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda where the masterminds of the genocide are put to trial. For two days, I watched the fleet of foreign lawyers bicker, wondering what could have been different if half of the energy spent cleaning up the genocide had been used to preempt it. When I returned to Rwanda—where chain-gangs of pink-clad prisoners lined the road-sides—I attended the traditional *gacaca* courts. Sitting cross-legged in a grassy field, the only *mzungu* in a sea of Rwandans, I watched murderers confess their crimes to the families of their victims and walk free—an indispensable human experiment in restorative, not retributive justice.

I have learned that a people, betrayed by their government and abandoned by the world, can overcome an unspeakable genocide and still have

the strength and clarity of thought to sit side-by-side in a crowded classroom and learn English. The connection between my work and the Rwanda School Project will ensure that the library I am helping to create will not only be sustainable, but will grow and develop for years to come. My hope is to cultivate peace in a small way by creating a safe and stimulating environment where both Hutu and Tutsi children can come together and use literary access as a healing resource.

To accomplish my project, I spent the spring before my departure selecting, purchasing, and shipping books, meeting with local librarians, and learning that there is a veritable army of forces behind the calm façade of an organized book shelf. In April, I shipped thirteen boxes of books to Rwanda while a school system in California shipped one hundred boxes. But when I stepped off the plane in Kigali, I found myself at the mercy of the Rwandan Postal Service. The books had not yet arrived. I spent the next few weeks teaching a community English class to Rwandan students ages 9-46 in Rwamagana and getting to know my new Rwandan family members.

In Maria, my new Rwandan cousin, I found a best friend and constant companion. Although raised in separate worlds, we shared everything in Rwanda, including a bed. Once a week we took a bus to the capital city to check the Post Office for book arrivals. I taught her to use Microsoft Office, operate a camcorder, and write a resume. She showed me how to cook ibitoki, wear ketenge, and respect her powerful faith in God.

Finally, three days before I returned to America, twenty-one boxes of books arrived. Maria and I ferociously un-boxed and cataloged the volumes—mindful that the only book most Rwandans have ever handled is the Bible.

Because the school and library buildings were not constructed as of the end of this past summer, the library currently exists as un-housed institution. My efforts were only the beginning of the task, and as shipments of books continue to arrive every day, the framework is set for future volunteers to continue the project.

Back on campus at Washington and Lee University, I step with a purposeful energy. As campus president for Books for Africa, I relish trips up to the storage room to hand-select books to ship to Rwanda. As I flip through familiar pages, I am overcome with nostalgia for the stories that shaped my childhood and a vicarious excitement for the Rwandan students who will experience the creative power of these books for the first time. The Montgomery City School system has recently contacted me to offer a donation of 30,000 books to the Rwanda library. Shipping costs will have to be raised, but many volunteer-minded students at Washington and Lee University are interested in taking on the fund-raising challenge.