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Purdue Students in Tanzania: Establishing Connections Through 10 Years of Service-Learning

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COMMUNITY PARTNER SNAPSHOTS

Community partner snapshots describe the mission and vision of a community partner and highlight engagement opportunities for Purdue students with the organization and/or the clients.

Purdue Students in Tanzania: Establishing Connections Through 10 Years of Service-Learning

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Madison Busch (*Elementary Education*)

Student Author Bio Sketches

Laura Duke is a senior in Social Studies Education at Purdue University with minors in Global Studies and Psychology. She intends to teach history at the middle school level after graduation.

Madison Busch is a senior at Purdue University studying Elementary Education with minors in Global Studies and Learning Sciences and a certificate in Collaborative Leadership. She plans to become an elementary school teacher after graduation.

Introduction

The Maymester in Tanzania study abroad program is unlike many other study abroad programs offered at Purdue University. Students spend 28 days in Tanzania, with 15 of those days spent teaching in a Tanzanian school. Dr. Jill Newton created this program to have students incorporate service-learning into their study abroad experiences. During the initial trip in 2010, the first of many service-learning grants was awarded to this program for Samaritan Village Orphanage. To date, this program has received over \$25,000 in service-learning grants from

Purdue University to provide resources and make an impact on the communities students interact with daily while in Tanzania. Each of the five projects that are currently incorporated into Maymester in Tanzania have all begun as a result of student initiative. These projects serve Samaritan Village Orphanage, Fish Eagle Point, Boma Schools, Boma Village, and Pamoja Leo. Students form relationships with one another and Tanzanians as they implement these projects, interacting with and becoming attached to a new community. In the past 10 years, Samaritan Village has received three service-learning grants, Boma Schools received five service-learning grants, Boma Village received eight service-learning grants, Fish Eagle Point received two service-learning grants, and Pamoja Leo received one service-learning grant for a total of 19 grants and projects. It only takes one student to see a need in an area for the continuation and broadening of service through this program.

One important component of the Maymester in Tanzania program is the preparation phase. Before traveling to Tanzania, students are required to attend monthly meetings to learn about Tanzanian culture, language, and education. Researching these topics helps students decide the best way to implement service-learning grants. At the first meeting in January, each student chooses one of the five community partners to research. With this information, students help organize a service-learning grant. Students communicate with their respective community partners and identify their needs. Most of the items our community partners receive are ordered in the United States before Purdue students leave for Tanzania in May.

In the months before departure, it was difficult to visualize the impact we would have on the community and how service-learning would affect our own lives. We knew that we would be bringing school supplies to all grade levels, clothes to an orphanage, and books to a library, but did not completely understand how valuable these resources would be to those receiving them or what it would be like to see our projects in action until we arrived in Tanzania.

Community Partner Description

This program is centered on building partnerships within the community. Dr. Newton has created a strong relationship with the staff at Fish Eagle Point, an eco-lodge hotel located on the Boma Peninsula where Purdue students are housed for three weeks while in Tanzania. She ensures that students get to know the hotel staff through short interviews and daily conversations. This also gives students the opportunity to practice Kiswahili, one of the official languages of Tanzania.

The partnerships made with five local schools continue each year as the new group of Purdue students are placed at one of the schools to teach for three weeks. Purdue students teach Tanzanian students while learning about culture and Kiswahili through their mentor teachers at school. Many students stay in contact with these teachers and Fish Eagle Point staff long after returning to the United States through instant messaging apps.

The relationships made in the community are unique, as Purdue students are eager to learn and the Boma community generously looks forward to teaching about their country and culture. Through the years we have been able to provide at least 10 water tanks and kitchen supplies, and build a new library for Boma village. Partnerships have also been created with Pamoja Leo, a children's rights charity foundation, and Samaritan Village, an orphanage, allowing students to actively serve separate communities in Tanga and Arusha. Communication with Samaritan Village allows for Purdue students to prepare appropriate donations for the orphanage. Prior to arriving, Joseph Mmanyi, director of Samaritan Village, gives Dr. Newton a list of specific clothing items, toys, or other products the children need. One day of the trip is spent visiting the orphanage, where students distribute the donations and meet the children.

Impact

In May 2018, Laura had the opportunity to write and organize a \$1,500 grant for the five partner schools. As with each service-learning grant, Laura communicated with Dr. Newton and the community partner to determine resources that would best fit all of the schools' needs. There are a combined 2,300 students and 60 teachers at the five schools where Purdue students teach while in Tanzania. This particular service-learning grant provided each of the 2,300 students among five schools with two

Figure 1. Purdue students and Fish Eagle Point staff on the beach at Fish Eagle Point.

new workbooks and pens, sports equipment and chalk for each school, and various other school supplies for each of the 60 teachers.

With the creation of the partnership with Pamoja Leo in 2018, Maymester in Tanzania students will now be serving communities in Arusha, Tanga, and Boma Village, impacting well over 3,000 people combined in all three of those communities. From water tanks to clothing to flashlights to school supplies, the impact Purdue students participating in this program have created reaches

further every year. Purdue students have the opportunity to teach students who crave and respect education. We see Tanzanians working to give an education, a home, a family, and a life to children who would not otherwise have one.

The service-learning grant experiences are what enhance and define this program. They have an impact, not only on those who are directly benefiting from these 19 grants, but also on the 158 Purdue students who have carried them out in the past 10 years. A pen and

Figure 2. Madison (fourth from left) at Zingi Primary School.

Figure 3. Laura (first from right in the top row) at Zingibari Secondary School.

Figure 4. Samaritan Village Orphanage.

workbook for a student may not seem like a significant contribution, but these resources can award a student the opportunity to go one year further in his or her education. The initial \$500 service-learning grant to Samaritan Village Orphanage in 2010 created a legacy that students continue to carry out and expand upon each year as a new group embarks on this study abroad program.

Reflection

Laura: Some participants may reflect on this trip as encouraging them to feel grateful for the lives they have in the United States, but I tried to reflect on the trip by remembering what I learned from the country and culture. As I am preparing to enter into student teaching and eventually have my own classroom, I ask myself how I can incorporate what I learned while in Tanzania. The first thought that comes to mind is through service. As I was looking around my room in Tanzania with 4,600 workbooks and pens and countless other school supplies in every direction, I understood that we were providing something so much more important than I would probably ever experience in my life again. I hope that I teach my future students that actions truly are so much stronger than words, and that just because someone may not have endless resources does not mean they should not be awarded the same respect and opportunities that others receive. I may not speak of my time in Tanzania every day, or with as much passion as others, but I hope that my dedication to the service projects will rise above my words and speak for me.

Madison: When I think of the welcoming community I met in Tanzania, I think of Shufa, a student in Standard 6 (the equivalent of grade 5 in the United States). Each morning, our group of Purdue students rode a boat to Moa Village, then walked about two kilometers until we reached the school. Shufa waited for me until I got to her house and would hold my hand the entire way. As we passed different animals, she pointed to them and told me their names in Kiswahili, I repeated them (incorrectly), and she would laugh and have me practice again until I said them correctly. We became friends. Our efforts in the service-learning opportunities seemed like a small way to give back to the community that patiently taught me about their culture and made me feel welcome in a new place.

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