

Youth Leadership Service Learning Award

1. Last fall a group of freshman students from Upper Arlington High School began an ongoing service-learning project. In our Global History class, we began by researching current issues around the world and then voted on which one we found most interesting and beneficial. The issue we selected was the Lost Boys of Sudan. Our history teacher, Mr. Boesch, connected us with two Lost Boys, Jok Dau and Bol Aweng, at Ohio State University who were raising money to build a health clinic in their home village of Piol, Sudan. In order to learn more about The Lost Boys of Sudan and Jok and Bol's cause, we incorporated and related the topics into our curriculum for three main subjects: Global History, Freshman Literature and Composition (FLC), and Geometry. In geometry, we learned how to use drafting software to make 2D models and then from our drafts we built scale 3D models of possible clinics. Also, we researched and graphed statistics about The Lost Boys and worked on counting and rolling money from small fundraisers. In FLC, not only did we read passages about real life stories of Lost Boys, but we created brochures to help solicit donations as part of our persuasive writing unit. We further reflected on our experience by writing journal entries and reflective magazines. In global history, we connected the Lost Boys story of genocide in Sudan with stories of the Holocaust. We also compared and contrasted the Lost Boys stories with other events in history and ended our year with a timed writing and discussion on what we think Sudan would be like if they had followed the ideals of the Enlightenment.

Our research then led to raising funds and awareness for the Lost Boys' specific needs. We began with monthly bake sales at school and "Evenings with Jok and Bol" at a

local tea shop where parents and community members could learn about our project and ask questions to Jok and Bol themselves. These two events raised in excess of \$1,600, but in order to fund the building of a clinic we needed a single significant fund-raiser.

We decided to host a walk-a-thon to symbolize the experiences of the Lost Boys as they trekked across Africa. A partnership with the Upper Arlington Education Foundation covered the cost of t-shirts for our event. We realized that Jok and Bol were the age of first graders when they walked the 1,500 mile journey. This inspired us to reach out to local first grade classes to encourage the children to lead our walk-a-thon to represent the age of the Lost Boys when they walked to safety. A group of freshmen went out to local elementary schools and shared information about our walk-a-thon project. One of the first graders went home and talked to her grandfather about the Lost Boys' presentation. He was connected with the Columbus Foundation and arranged for an additional donation of \$1000.

As a culminating reflection, we combined our efforts to create an iMovie of student reflections on our learning that could be used to raise awareness and to visually display our work. Following the walk-a-thon we spent classroom time discussing the success of our efforts. We used the computer application Pages to create magazines containing interviews of Jok and Bol, interviews of our teachers, statistics, summaries of current events in Sudan and photos of our walk-a-thon. On the last day of school we hosted a pizza party with Jok and Bol and shared our thoughts on the year's events and discussed our plans for the next school year.

2. From the discovery of the issue to the final product, our project was student led. We presented the issue and decided on ways to solve it. Then as a group of freshmen students we split up the work in order for everyone to participate and to get the job done. As groups of 5 to 7 students we went out into the community to local elementary schools, businesses, the school board, and the civic association to raise awareness and funds. Students individually took time to interview Jok and Bol and perform fundraisers. The idea for our Strides for Sudan walk-a-thon was presented by a student and the event was student planned and led. Every student took part in the bake sales, penny wars and class assignments. At the end of our project our reflection video and magazines were all student created.

3. Our project broke the boundaries of our Upper Arlington community and stretched out to the world-wide community. We were able to raise funds for the Lost Boys, Jok and Bol, who are graduates from the Ohio State University and spread awareness of the issue to all ages of community members, but truly our fundraising is being used to directly save lives in Sudan. As a group of freshmen we were able to raise \$14,000 that went to support the clinic in Piol, Sudan. It will be used to purchase both a cold storage unit for immunizations and solar panels. Now as sophomores, we are acting as leaders for a new group of freshmen taking on the project. Also, a club is beginning to meet to continue the project and support the cause.

4. A year of working together to reach a goal has allowed 85 students to understand the true meaning and importance of service. A perfect example of this would be Club Sudan. A group of students have come together by choice for another year of service. Our

service-learning project taught us to be responsible and self-directed students. We are all proud of what we accomplished and gained a lot from our experiences. We learned that a small group of students can make a big impact on the world. As Mr. Boesch emphasizes, it's not about knowing the facts—it's about what you do with them.