

Subscriber Showcase

Superintendent Establishes Foundation

Superintendent of the Fairport Central School District, Dr. William Cala, oversees the education of 7,239 students in eight schools, and the additional work of educators and staffers in the district office, the transportation center and food service, instructional support, and buildings and grounds facilities. The district is high-achieving, with a 97% graduation rate, excellent SAT and ACT scores, 116 AP Scholars in the last year, and an \$85+ million budget. His district serves a residential community of about 40,000 in a suburb located 12 miles southeast of Rochester. He understands, without a doubt, the importance of education.

Recently, Dr. Cala traveled to Kenya with his wife, Joanne, a school counselor, and developed a vision to share the opportunity the students in his district are afforded with children in remote areas of Kenya who have lesser resources and little chance to expand them. Simply put, Dr. Cala wants to sponsor and partner schools in these remote areas. His research indicates that for \$10,000, a state-of-the-art school can be built. He wants to help build them, and to make them sister schools with the Fairport Central School District.

In an email from Africa to colleagues, Dr. Cala wrote, “This trip has been so incredibly meaningful to Joanne and me. The view of the world from here must challenge our sense of responsibility to our fellow human beings. We have decided to limit our scope to the children and school of Mbaka Oromo. This plan is four-fold: Bricks and mortar (desperate need), intercultural relationships between Kenya and Fairport; providing Scholarships to Kenya (so they can attend beyond grade 8); and developing projects of self-sustainability (projects where they can earn their own money).”

In his chronicle, Dr. Cala then wrote, “We arrived at Chualemo where our school, Mbaka Oromo is located. We got off of the bus at the base of the hill. The school, on a mountain in the distance, is about a 45 minute walk of over three miles. It's a wonderful hike, but imagine the principal and teachers who have to walk this every day and sometimes more than once.

“Meeting the students and faculty was life-altering. The kids in ratty clothes, no shoes and some hungry. But then the brilliance. These are among the best educated kids I have ever encountered. The school goes to grade 8. I took pictures of the math the kids were doing...USA high-school level. Advanced literature. Attendance....they never miss school even under difficult situations. Discipline...remarkable. All three of us taught lessons. I taught a seventh grade class of 58 kids. Joanne and Jim broke up their 8th grade class by boys and girls and used some counseling strategies to prepare them for their national exams that they are taking on November 7th. In spite of the deplorable conditions and savage lives that these children lead, these 8th graders scored 6 of the top 10 spots in nationals out of 172 schools.”

Dr. Cala went on to write, “Some facts about our kids in Mbaka Oromo. Of the 514 kids, 180 are orphans. Of the 41 kids in level 8, 40% are orphans. The remaining kids have one parent or two. This is all the results of AIDS. The kids here need our help. We brought them pens and other trinkets. It was as if we were bringing them gold. What an incredible opportunity we have before us.”

Since returning from this amazing trip, Dr. and Mrs. Cala have formed the foundation, “Joining Hands and Hearts.” To share in the vision or hear more write to Dr. Cala at william_cala@fairport.monroe.edu, to Jim Nowak at jamesbnowak@yahoo.com, or to Joanne Cala at jcala@rochester.com. Donations may be made directly, payable to Joining Hearts and Hands and sent to Joanne Cala, 9 Fieldston Grove, Fairport, NY 14450.

PHOTO CAPTION: Dr. William Cala listens to two young girls recite poems about social injustice, AIDS and poverty in front of the entire student body. “They moved me to tears,” said Dr. Cala.