



Dear Families and Friends;

While looking for new and diverse program ideas, we here at the Delanco Public Library have become aware of a truly unique undertaking between a group of inspired volunteers in Gladstone, NJ and a group of dedicated educators in Amagoro, western Kenya to build a library that could serve many children and adults in the Amagoro area.

Embracing the student/library relationship of Amagoro, it seemed like a Pen Pal project is just the ticket for a cross-oceans adventure without leaving home!

A Pen Pal may sound like an old-fashioned concept, and yet there are services throughout the USA that administer such relationships and have much good to say about the experience and its benefits. ***A global Pen Pal*** provides a safe and secure way to visit another corner of the world from your own home moderated by a teacher or librarian on both ends.

We envision the children in Amagoro, who study in English and are eager to practice outside the classroom, will hand-write letters to either families or individual children. These letters, sometimes including a drawing, photograph or other fun thing to share, will be scanned and emailed to us. We will then respond, in like fashion, perhaps inviting those children to partake in an activity or do some drawing of local structures, friends, animals. We have many ideas for creative ways to engage our Kenyan friends!

KENYAN SCHOOLS

In rural Kenya, schools are often rudimentary, lacking in supplies such as books, quite rigorous academically and yet limited in scope. Most children wish to attend elementary school and when it is economically feasible for the family, they do- but the admission rate to high school after 8th grade depends on a test which only about 6 % pass! One of the main reasons is- lack of current textbooks and overall very few academic resources- such as a library.

This year, the rate of passing the test and admission to high school / secondary school is up from 6% to 30%!

EXPLORE THE KIWIMBI WEBSITE

(<https://kiwimbi.org/>) to see how the library has grown into an amazing resource with several smaller satellite libraries, a community center, even a small museum of the local culture. Storytelling, an ancient cultural tradition, is returning to the villages through the work of the library and museum.

Snail mail can also be fun to experience! The different sort of paper, the unique stamps, the time and wear and tear of the journey! It is possible to send a monthly letter that way, but to sustain interest and keep a lively exchange going, scanned and emailed letters make sense (the library in Amagoro has recently received a government grant to upgrade their internet effectiveness).

As the groups form, there will be suggestions as to how to write an introductory letter. Ask questions, share your own hobbies and studies, likes and dislikes- your family, your friends- and then there will be games and projects to pursue together. We can make use of videos too, and eventually Zoom will allow us to meet in a virtual way- so much to look forward to on a Pen Pal adventure.

Please consider being a part of this new project! We are looking forward to speaking from Library to Library- and to getting started this summer.