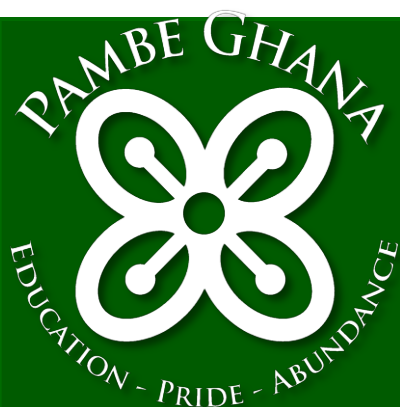


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PAMBE Ghana

Partnership for Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education in Ghana

Summer 2015 Issue



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TRANSFORMING LIVES IN GHANA AND AT HOME

After years of volunteer work and support, a team of Oklahoma City board members and supporters journeyed to West Africa this summer to see for themselves the work of PAMBE Ghana at La'Angum Learning Center and the villages it serves. Consensus of the group of seven:

Their lives will never be the same.

Please look inside to meet the diverse team and hear about their experiences in the field.

PAMBE Ghana

Partnership for Mother Tongue
Based Bilingual Education in Ghana

P.O. Box 18813
Oklahoma City, OK 73154

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www.pambeghana.org

PAMBE Ghana is a registered
501(c)(3) organization

Save the Date • Nov. 14 • Celebrate PAMBE Ghana

Red Dirt Rising

Two things Oklahoma and northern Ghana have in common: can-do people and red earth. Join us at 7 p.m. at St. Paul's Cathedral, OKC, for a celebration of the many hands which together created a vibrant center for learning from a barren hilltop. Look to the website for details: www.pambeghana.org

There are as many experiences and stories as there are travelers who visited the La'Angum Learning Center ("LLC") in the Mamprusi District of northern Ghana last July, the cooler season in that part of the world. Most say they are still processing their experiences, awakening regularly with new appreciation or insight. Following are quick takeaways from each. Look for longer accounts in future issues and on the PAMBE Ghana website, pambeghana.org. In addition to visiting the school and the villages it serves, they met with tribal elders and members of the Ghanaian Educational Service, and toured the unique and inspiring Go-Home Project in Gambaga, which provides fair trade goods sold in PAMBE Ghana's Global Market shop.

Judy Federa

The seasonal rains had just started, and they were a month late. So crops were a month late, and the water tanks were just beginning to fill. I learned quickly how rude it was to display and take a swig out of my water bottle. Children came up to me, touched my bottle and looked up at me. ... We were all thirsty — it was 90 degrees. But I had a water bottle. I learned that water was much more than refreshing. It was precious.



Judy and LLC Student

Judy has called Oklahoma home since 2009. She became aware of PAMBE Ghana from her book group, signed up to staff the Global Market in 2010, and since then has served in many capacities, including as administrative coordinator. She is currently on the Board. She is also on the board of deadCENTER Film Institute, volunteers with the Oklahoma Food Coop and is a Master Gardener. Judy has a background in marketing and communications with both for profit and non-profit organizations.

Richard Williamson

As we traveled northern Ghana, we went to villages where we were perhaps the first westerners the children had ever seen. A few were understandably afraid of us. But most swarmed around us with big smiles and wanted to hold our hands and walk with us. One little boy was eating raspberries with a lot of juice out of a bowl. He had juice up to his elbows on both arms. When he finished his raspberries, whose hand did he want to hold? Mine, of course! So, he took my hand, and we walked through the village together. It is amazing how sweet and trusting these children are.

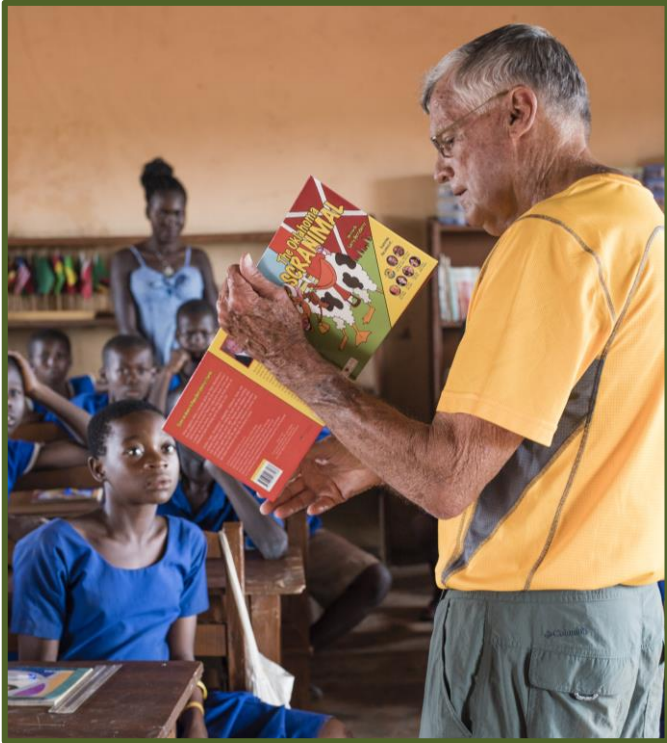


Richard's Raspberry Boy

Richard, a certified public accountant, has served as PAMBE Ghana's Treasurer since its inception. He is probate and trust management finance manager for the American Cancer Society.

Jane Wheeler

We took several copies of Larry Derryberry's book, The Oklahoma Scranimal, to leave in the LLC library. Larry Derryberry, a former Oklahoma Attorney General and long-time Oklahoma attorney, began writing children's books as gifts for his grandchildren. The Oklahoma Scranimal tells the story of five farm animals that became one goofy animal after a tornado hits the farm where they live. Sam Bowman read the story to a class at LLC on a day following a fierce thunderstorm in northern Ghana.



Being read to has universal appeal.

Jane is a former Chief of the Consumer Protection Unit at the Oklahoma Attorney General's Office. After her retirement she joined the PAMBE Ghana Board because of her interest in Africa and PAMBE Ghana's story. She also serves on the State of Oklahoma Dispute Resolution Board and the Environmental Coalition of the Oklahoma Methodist Conference.

Sam Bowman

Are the kids learning at La'Angum Learning Center? It was good to hear of the progress being made from both Alice and Baba; nevertheless, there's nothing like hearing it from a credible outside source. Alice arranged for us to meet with representatives from the local council for Education Services in Ghana. The council representative conveyed his appreciation for PAMBE Ghana's decision to start a new school in the bush, rather than establishing another school in his town. He said that LLC is outperforming some of the established public schools in his district. School performance is one of every country's biggest challenges. Performing in the "bush" is even a greater challenge, and I am confident the challenge is being met at LLC.



Children concentrate on work at LLC.

Sam's professional social work career started in the barrios in east Los Angeles. In 1969, while intending to return home to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he heard of an opportunity in Oklahoma City with Neighborhood Services Organization. He was hired and has been in Oklahoma since. Sam was elected to the Oklahoma City Council, Ward 2, and served for eight years. He volunteers for Whiz Kids and is a member of Mosaic United Methodist Church.

Meet the Chief

The three major belief systems in northern Ghana are Christianity, Islam and Traditional. Both Islam and Traditional allow a man to have more than one wife, and many do. Every village has a "chief" - an older respected man or woman. LLC's head teacher is called 'Chief.' Chief is a little man about 55-60 years old, very friendly, talkative, and may always be found with a big smile. Chief has 10 children - six with his first wife, including a set of twins, and four with his second wife, also including twins. His oldest child is a 37-year-old son and his youngest, 8-month-old twin girls. We visited Chief on a Sunday at his compound in the village. He was sitting outdoors under a bush shade shelter with his second wife and her four children. Chief was just one of the many interesting and delightful people we encountered on our trip.

~Richard Williamson



Brian Davis

Educating hundreds of children, who would otherwise follow their families into hard lives as rural 'dry land' farmers, is powerful enough. But our visits with tribal and government officials made it clear that LLC is transforming the life of the regions around it. An official of the national education service told us LLC's success will encourage other villages to establish their own, similar schools. The head of the regional government said he is so impressed by the school's performance that the next extension of Ghana's rural electrification program will include that area. Tribal leaders told us they are counting on LLC to help them close the education gap between northern Ghana and the more developed south. Visits with dozens of families showed us that the school has generated enormous pride in the villages it serves, and no wonder: Many of LLC's children are the first in their families ever to go to school - and to get a chance to follow a different life path.

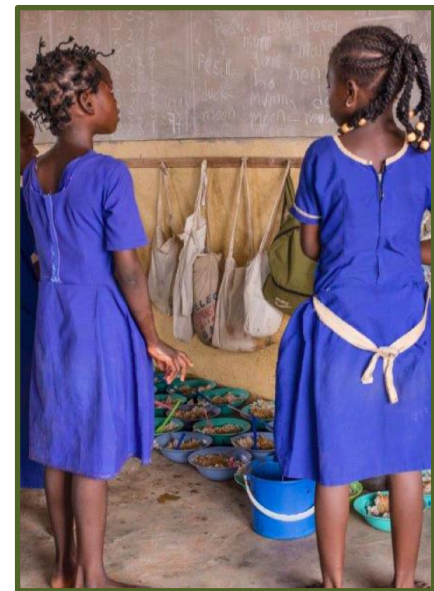


Brian with a Sub-Chief of Nalerigu, Alice and Richard, outside the palace of the King of Mamprugu

Brian became a member of the PAMBE Ghana family through his wife, Judy Federa, who serves on the board. He is the television voice of Oklahoma City's professional basketball team, the Thunder. Brian and Judy are accomplished travelers. Africa is the fourth continent he has visited.

Kristin Williamson

I was truly amazed by what a difference providing meals for students can have on the outcomes of the children. Each family with children enrolled in LLC provides a portion of its harvest to the school, and the families take turns preparing meals to ensure that all students have a hot meal at school every day. Most government funded schools do not provide student meals. As a result, many rural students drop out of such schools because it is difficult to walk 5 or 6 miles to school, sit through an entire day of classes without lunch, then repeat the long walk home. The easier path is to drop out of school and work the fields or find other work in the village. The simple act of providing a daily, home-grown meal has ensured that not a single student has dropped out of La'Angum Learning Center since inception. And by continuing their education, its students have so many more opportunities ahead of them.



LLC students help serve lunch.

Kristin is the Children's Services Coordinator for the Metropolitan Library System. She helps plan system-wide programs such as author visits and summer reading. She also has a small business called 'For Claws and Paws' where she makes leashes, collars and bandanas for pets, and donates a portion of the proceeds to animal rescue efforts.

Welcome, new additions to the PAMBE Ghana family.

Lucas Gabriel Abreu Gubbels was born Nov. 5, 2014 in Havana, Cuba, to Jamila Gubbels and her husband, Jorge. Jamila is a medical student in Havana, while Jorge is an artist who has supported PAMBE Ghana. Lucas is the first grandchild of PAMBE Ghana's Executive Director Alice Iddi-Gubbels, and her husband, Peter.

Olivia Marguerite Holst Jones was born Aug. 26, 2015. Ms. Jones joins her parents, Warren Puffer Jones and Kelly Holst, and brother, Isaac, at home in Oklahoma City, where Warren is Director of Music and Arts at First Presbyterian Church, as well as adjunct faculty, Musicology, at Oklahoma City University, and Kelly is an Assistant Professor of Voice at Oklahoma City University. Warren and Kelly have supported PAMBE Ghana through their acclaimed musical performances.

Stuart Williamson

For me, the most striking impression upon arriving at the La'Angum Learning Center, located off of a washed-out road in a remote region of northern Ghana, was one of its improbability. Seeing the charming classrooms in person registers something that words and pictures don't fully capture. It's the context of the place, the staff and the community which makes it really special. Few would visit a school in Oklahoma City and ascribe its very existence to a minor miracle. We take for granted how such things come about through established property taxes and pre-existing infrastructure. The more projects and agencies we visited in Ghana, the more overwhelming the lack of these foundations seemed. On such occasions, discussions often opened with the question, "Where do you begin...?" However, after our week at the school, I recognize PAMBE Ghana has provided an improbable foothold to address that question. The experience broadened my understanding of how the school positively impacts both the children and neighboring villages as a whole. It is a proving ground which promotes education, health and sanitation practices, in addition to drawing infrastructure investment for electricity, computers and more schools in the area. But the most amazing thing is that the school exists at all. It makes one appreciate the mountains that are routinely moved on two continents to make that happen.

Stuart is a reformed drummer who has embarked on a second career as a software developer. He enjoys cooking, traveling and being happily married to Kristen. He has been fortunate to visit and become acquainted with many fantastic people through his father Richard's involvement with World Neighbors and PAMBE Ghana.



Stuart with students in the computer lab

PAMBE Ghana has received tremendous support from Rotary clubs worldwide. Recently, the Canadiana Rotary clubs of Watford/District 6330 and Wainright/District 5370 collaborated with the Tamale Rotary in northern Ghana to build a solar powered computer lab at LLC. The team from Oklahoma was able to visit the Tamale club and personally thank its members. They also attended the dedication of the computer lab, which was named in memory of Mario and Sue Gubbels, of the Watford Rotary Club.



With members of the Tamale Rotary

Want to learn more?

- Check out the PAMBE Ghana website, pambeghana.org. Each traveler will be featured in an upcoming monthly article posted on the site.
- Attend the celebration Red Dirt Rising at 7 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 14, at St. Paul's Cathedral in Oklahoma City. Several who journeyed to Ghana will be present to share their stories and photos of the trip at this special event which will include dinner, music and more. Plan now to come and invite friends and family to learn about the work that these Board members and supporters now see as more valuable than ever. Details on the website.
- Monthly PAMBE Ghana electronic newsletters are on the way. To receive them, please make sure we have your correct email address. Send to: pambeghana@gmail.com



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER:



Joyful dedication
of computer lab

**Board members and
friends share insights
from their July 2015
visit to West Africa
and La'Angum
Learning Center**

**Save the Date: Red
Dirt Rising - a
celebration at St.
Paul's Cathedral,
Oklahoma City, 7 p.m.,
Saturday, Nov. 14.**



Learning by doing

La'Angum Learning
Center's lunch program
is crucial to student
success and retention.



A brief rest before water
pumping resumes. This
laborious daily task is
largely the work of
community females.