

Hope and Help from San Domenico to Nigeria

By Susan Sun '15

Thanks to funding support from the Julie Davis Butler Award, seniors Aminat Oladunjoye and Camille Ayanruoh were each able to travel to Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, for a few weeks of service. Both Ayanruoh and Oladunjoye have roots in the country, and although they worked separately on different projects, both benefited greatly from their experiences in Nigeria.

Last April, Oladunjoye coordinated an activity program at “Sought After Children Orphanage” in Aja, Lagos state.



Senior Aminat Oladunjoye '15, working with children in Aja.



There were about 40 orphans in the facility. Every day, Oladunjoye worked with the younger children during the morning and the older students in the afternoon. She brought crayons, coloring paper, and soccer balls for them. In addition, she also held a dance party for the children during her time there and helped them to make a music video.

Oladunjoye’s primary motivation for traveling to Nigeria was her feeling of connection, mainly because her parents are from Nigeria. She wanted to give back to the community so she chose to volunteer, hoping to bring the

children some enjoyable activities such as spelling bees to enrich their afterschool life.

More recently, in July, fellow senior Camille Ayanruoh also traveled to Nigeria, where she volunteered as a teaching assistant in the Bloombreed Montessori school in Port Harcourt. During her time there, Ayanruoh worked with toddlers all day, beginning early in the morning and continuing through the afternoon, to help prepare them for vocabulary and speech aptitude tests.

Like Oladunjoye, Ayanruoh was interested to travel to Nigeria because her father was born and raised there.

Working with children in Nigeria helped both Ayanruoh and Oladunjoye see beyond the common negative stereotypes of Africa, shaped by news of wars, Ebola, and the kidnapping of hundreds of girls by Islamic extremists last spring. Oladunjoye was impressed with the resilience of the children she met,

who have grown up in difficult circumstances. “At first, I expected them to be sad because they are orphans,” Oldadunjoye reflected. “But they were all very happy all the time. And I am grateful for that.”

Ayanruoh realized that these children were capable of joy in their circumstances. During the time she spent Port Harcourt, Ayanruoh felt as if she could imagine being one of the kids she was teaching. “Even though we come from different places in the world, and from



Camille Ayanruoh '15 with John Ashikenni, Head of the Bloombreed Montessori School in Port Harcourt.

different circumstances, we share the same appreciation of the value of education and how important it is,” Ayanruoh said.

As for the lasting impression that this experience has had on Camille, she feels very grateful and humbled by her time in Nigeria. This experience has also motivated her towards pursuing a career in childhood development

Coco Jiang Helps Bring Operation Smile to China

By Emily Datnow '15

As service is a component of San Domenico Upper School's curriculum, each student is required to complete a community service project, known as a R.O.S.E. project—short for "Real Opportunities in Service Education"—between her junior and senior years.

Senior Coco Jiang '15 completed her project in Sangzhi, a city in China's Hunan province, where she worked with Operation Smile, an organization that performs cleft lip and palate surgeries on children and adults in low-income countries. Jiang actually began her work for this organization in more than a year ago when she and a friend started selling constructed origami roses in order to raise money.

"We were turning low cost paper into something romantic," Jiang explained. "All of the money



Senior Coco Jiang '15 in the children's ward at the clinic in Sangzhi, China.

raised from this project went straight to Operation Smile."

Jiang spent two weeks at a clinic, where doctors flew in from all over the world to perform simple cleft-palate surgeries on patients with this condition. Each patient has to be screened, photographed, and is required to fill out paperwork before the doctors to decide if they fit the surgical requirements.

During those two weeks, 89 out of

the 153 potential patients underwent the procedure. Jiang was on hand at the clinic everyday, beginning as early as 6:00 in the morning, and usually staying until evening.

She spent her time there providing assurance to the patients and helping with logistics in the clinic. "Parents of the children were often very calm before the procedure, but soon as the operating room doors closed, the parents broke down and started crying," Jiang said.

Jiang felt that the experience of working at Operation Smile was very beneficial and reassured her that she wants to study medicine in the future. "The change that this organization creates is very tangible," said one of the organization member whom Jiang interviewed at the end of her experience. "It is one of the most rewarding projects because you literally see the change happening."

Celebrating Twenty Five Years of the Julie Davis Butler Service Award

By Leslie Flores '09

This article was written by Leslie Flores '09, onetime co-coordinator of the Social Justice Club, recipient of the Julie Davis Butler Award in 2008, and the St. Rose of Lima Service Award upon graduation in 2009. Leslie died in a car accident in 2012.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the inception of the Julie Davis Butler Award, a student service grant to honor the 1959 graduate who dedicated her life to service, community and family before her untimely death in an airplane crash in 1987. "It is a very important year to celebrate and honor Julie's legacy," Sister Gervaise Valpey, President Emerita of San Domenico School, said of the scholarship, which is supported by Julie Davis Butler's family, friends and classmates.

As a student, Julie Davis was a strong leader from the start. Sister Gervaise remembers Julie as "quietly strong, determined, preserving, loving and selfless." She was class president for three consecutive years, and was selected by her classmates to represent Mary in Tableaux. She loved the outdoors and was a supportive friend to many.



Julie Davis in her 1959 Yearbook photo.

She became a single parent after her husband's plane was shot down during the Vietnam War. She became an active advocate for humane treatment of prisoners while her husband remained in a Vietnamese prison camp for five years. She regularly petitioned Congress to prioritize the release of POWs.

Over the last two decades, more than a total of \$54,000 has been awarded to 52* San Domenico juniors who have volunteered in many countries such as Chile, China, Northern Ireland, and Tanzania. This year the Julie Davis Butler Award sponsored seven girls to engage in service around the globe and

right here in Marin—a fitting tribute to her legacy.

Every September, San Domenico holds an assembly, in which recipients of the award honor Davis Butler by presenting on their experiences.

The Social Justice Club is proud to dedicate this issue of our newsletter to her memory.

* This figure now tops 70.

Susan Sun Brings S.T.E.M. to Rural Cambodia

By Makenna Dixon-Essien

During the summer, Senior Susan '15 joined Robert Reed, Professor of Engineering at Carnegie Mellon Engineering, to serve as a teacher's assistant to Rongko High School located in Banteay Meanchey, Cambodia. Sun came about this program through San Domenico's chapter of the Children in Need Club in which she is the 2014 Math and Science Coordinator. In that role, Sun had already worked with children from low income families in San Rafael's Canal neighborhood, where they helped children with math and science projects.

Teaching others about something she is passionate about inspired Sun's travel to Banteay Meanchey, Cambodia. During the second half of June, Sun worked with students of the high school and with children of the New Hope for Orphans orphanage in a remote corner of Cambodia.



The work revolved around science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, known



Senior Susan Sun '15, helping students learn about electrical circuitry in Cambodia.

collectively as S.T.E.M. She specifically chose a program that focused on technology because she believes that the development of a country, in the 21st century is very dependent upon technology. Even though Rongko High School is ranked the top school in Cambodia, the students of the school lacks the privileges and advantages of schools in the developed world. During her stay, Sun came across many challenging obstacles in which she over came. For example, communicating with students who didn't speak English was an obstacles and they never knew if or when teacher or translator would arrive. However, Sun

maintained a positive and insightful attitude through it all.

From her experience, Sun said that she would never forget the time she had the opportunity to play soccer with the children of the orphanage. Although she was unable to communicate with them she felt as if she had "developed a bond" and that the children understood that she was not just another foreigner who has visited to give money out of pity, but a teenager like them.

Before leaving, Sun donated a LCD projector to the high school and seven hundred dollars to the orphanage in order for orphanage to buy updated supplies for the children.

Aeqvitas is published by the student members of San Domenico's Social Justice Club.

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The San Domenico Social Justice Club is committed to creating awareness among ourselves and our community concerning local and global social injustices. We act upon this knowledge in solidarity with the global community in order to positively impact the world. As a group of young women, we are dedicated to fostering respect and equality, and we strive for equal opportunities for all.

Students Experience the “Real Fiji” through Service

By Ione Hope '16

Last summer, seniors Estelle Pritchard '15 and Nicole Semanick '15 did their R.O.S.E project in Fiji, a nation consisting of 800 islands located in the middle of the Pacific Ocean between New Zealand and Hawaii.

With the help of Rustic Pathways, an organization that sets youths up with community service work around the world, they left for Fiji a few days after school got out for the summer of 2014. These two seniors chose to do this project because they



Seniors Nicole Semanick and Estelle Pritchard, mixing concrete in Fiji.

you see in Fiji are the vacation spots,” Pritchard said. “But we wanted to see the real Fiji”.

While in Fiji, Pritchard and Semanick worked in schools with children from kindergarten through eighth grade. There, they helped teach Math, English, Art, PE and many other subjects that the students don't have



wanted to learn about a new place and they thought that the Rustic Pathways program looked very interesting and authentic.

Pritchard noted that the small impoverished islands of Fiji are too often portrayed far more glamorous than it really is. “All

access to. They also did some hands-on community service in a small village, where they helped install toilets and tile floors.

Their trip may have been “once in a lifetime” experience, but they both hope to go back someday.

Making Homes for Marin’s “Hidden Homeless”

By Aminat Oladunjoye '15

Beginning around Christmas last winter, seniors Emily Datnow and Shea Rounds drove up to Novato to help clean, decorate, pick up furniture, and furnish houses for families transitioning out of homelessness. In the months since, they have continued working through Homeward Bound of Marin to fix up houses in San Rafael and Novato.

During their junior year, they learned about “hidden homelessness” here and Marin and discovered how challenging it is to thrive in the Bay Area on minimum wage through the “Getting by in the Bay Area” project during junior year, this drove them to dedicate their R.O.S.E Project on people who were struggling in their community. That’s when they connected with Homeward Bound, a Novato-based organization that helps homeless people get back on their feet with a range of programs, including job training and housing assistance. The organization provides housing through a lottery system that allows qualifying candidates to apply for housing once every month. Recipients are allowed to move into a furnished house and they do not have to start paying full rent until a month has passed, so that they would have time to find a stable job.

Rounds noted that most of the families



Seniors Emily Datnow and Shea Rounds have been working with Homeward Bound of Marin for the last year.

were single parents with a least two kids who had been kicked out of homeless shelters due to lack of space. “By fixing these homes we were showing these families that people care about them and that they deserve a second chance,” Rounds said.

After the families had moved in Datnow and Rounds received multiple emails from Homeward Bound describing how thankful the families were for their new homes. “It felt good when we saw how much the families loved the houses and that our work we put went to good use,” Datnow said.

“Endurance, Love, and Commitment” in Chinese Foster Homes

By Jolene Guerin '16

Over the summer, seniors Jacqueline Liang and Ivy Liang both did service projects that involved helping young children in southern China. For two weeks in June, Ivy Liang spent her days with more than 400 children at the Ye-lun Primary School in southern China's mountainous Guangxi Province. Meanwhile, Jacqueline Liang worked with foster children in the nearby province of Fujian.



Senior Ivy Liang '15 with her eager students at the Ye-lun Primary School.

home. This foster home holds more than sixty kids, ranging 3-12 years old, however only ten of them are able to operate independently without the help of adults. The other children are either blind, autistic, have myasthenia, cerebral palsy or a combination of several severe illnesses. This foster home provides a home to children who are usually neglected by society due to their physical or mental disabilities. Jacqueline chose this project because of her belief that it is her

duty to help the most vulnerable members of society.

Jacqueline volunteered assistance through feeding the children, encouraging them to take physical exercise or therapy, and maintaining the children's personal hygiene through brushing teeth and changing diapers.

Funds from the Julie Davis Butler award gave both Ivy and Jacqueline the opportunity to purchase much needed supplies to support their initiatives. For Jacqueline this meant helping to pay for medicine for sick children in the home. Ivy brought school supplies for the children because the school often lacks these necessary supplies as a result of the inadequate government funding.

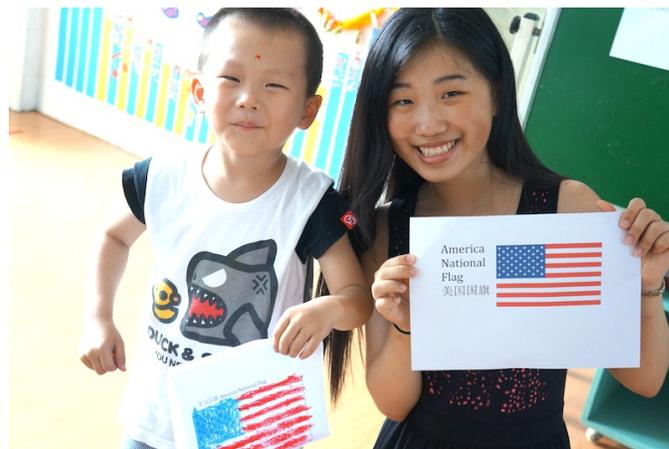
Jacqueline was greatly impacted by her experience. “I feel like in the foster home the children



Seniors Jacqueline Liang '15 enjoyed her time working with children in Fujian Province.

For Ivy, this was an opportunity do her part in keeping up a family tradition. Before her grandfather passed away, he was the principal of Ye-lun Primary School. During this time, her older cousin constantly brought school supplies to the kids and also built a library in the school. Ivy is continuing her family's work through tutoring the children in reading Chinese characters and through bringing them schools supplies. Through her experience in the Ye-lun school, Ivy also built relationships with the students through singing and engaging in fun and exciting conversations that included tales of what life is like outside of the mountains. “I was nervous that I lacked the ability to get along with the children,” Ivy said. “But then their friendly welcoming and curiosity dissipated all my negative ideas.”

Jacqueline also worked with children, but under different circumstances; she served children with severe health problems residing in a foster



Seniors Jacqueline Liang's project also included a unit on basic introduction to American culture and traditions.

have been transformed into beautiful precious stones, and they exemplify the meaning of life that is endurance, love, and commitment,” she said. “They gave me the strength not to give up.”

A Tradition of Helping Children with Special Needs in China

By Christina Hong '16 & Ealan Jiang '16

Last summer, seniors Angelina Chen and Claire Hu returned to their hometowns in China to contribute their efforts within their communities, assisting in the care of disabled, orphaned, and autistic children by providing fun and educational activities.

Over the last two years, Angelina Chen has spent her summers working in the Yuxi Welfare Center, which is located in her hometown of Yuxi in China's



Yunnan province. The center was created by the government to take in rural children who were abandoned by their parents due to physical and mental disabilities or lack of money in the family. Chen first went there during her sophomore year summer and felt a deep connection with the children. This year, she went back to Yuxi Welfare center to stay with her “little angels” again. Besides taking



Senior Angelina Chen '15, at work with the children in the Yuxi Welfare Center.

care those children in their daily routines, Chen also helped teach kids how to write, draw, paint, and do math.

Meanwhile, Claire Hu returned to the Autism Rehabilitation Center in Hangzhou, China, where she had volunteered on several occasions over the past three

years, usually, her job was assisting with children who have various disabilities. Knowing that the parents of autistic children are not trained to educate them, Hu and her friend wanted to at least bring some happiness to the children.

Thanks to the money that she received from the Julie Davis Butler award, she prepared balloon making and T-shirt painting activities with the children. Making beautiful balloons, painting not only on the T-shirts but also on their faces or arms, children laughed with one another. One time Hu watched a boy named Tiantian voluntarily cleaned the brushes, bowls and even try to use a napkin to wipe her arm. “I felt moved every single time,” Hu said.

Chen developed a similar connection to the children in her care. After looking after the little ones she has a greater understanding of her parents and realizes that it is not easy to raise a child. “Many things that we take for granted such as the love and attention of adults are precious to these children,” Chen said.



Senior Claire Hu '15 at the Autism Rehabilitation Center in Hangzhou.