

**Youth Summer Learning Program
June 30th 2008-August 8th 2008
Gedam Sefer Community University Partnership**

In an effort to meet the community's identified need for a safe and educational outlet for children during the school holidays, the Gedam Sefer Community University Partnership planned and implemented a six-week intensive language immersion program for community youth. The Summer Learning Program (SLP) sought to provide a safe learning environment for promoting academic, social and emotional well-being. Bethlehem School served as the programming site for daily classroom activities. This location was readily accessible to all program participants and highly recognized within the community as a safe and welcoming space. The SLP met five days per week from 9:00am-12:00pm for six weeks.

The Summer Learning Program was planned and implemented using an entirely voluntary staff. Under the direction of Gedam Sefer community leaders, Richelle Haines, a Masters of Social Work student from Loyola University, Chicago, IL, USA, served as the lead teacher. Her responsibilities included determining the placement for each child, planning daily lessons, and providing program oversight. Nathan Haines (M.A. DePaul University, Chicago, IL, USA) provided essential educational expertise by serving as the Instructor for TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). He ensured that all voluntary staff carried out TESOL best practices.

Additionally, three visiting program staff contributed a total of more than three weeks of voluntary service. Johnna Main (JD student, John Marshall School of Law, Atlanta, GA, USA) led two weeks of drama workshops, which included teaching the youth how to write and perform their own plays. Sara Bosaw (RN, Children's Memorial Hospital, Chicago, IL, USA), and Jarmila Szkutova (MSW, Loyola University, Chicago, IL, USA) presented Healthy Living workshops, including drama, arts and crafts, and conversation.



Sara and Jarmila share art and drama skills with children



Youth volunteers with Richelle and Nathan Haines

One of the SLP program goals involved training high school volunteers in leadership and teaching skills, so that they might be able to lead the SLP and work towards making the program self-sufficient in the future. Five high school graduates from the Gedam Sefer community participated in the SLP as junior leaders. Pairs of leaders were placed in classrooms with trained staff in order to facilitate translation, ensure cultural compatibility of the presented material, and learning classroom techniques for leading groups. One day a week, junior leaders modeled what they learned by being the lead facilitator of a group of youth. Junior leaders included Helina Moges Berika, Selamawit Alemayehu Wole, Wintana Hailu Adal, Sisay Fekadu Wolde and Temesgen Zenebe Zewge.

Using a hands-on educational philosophy, program participants participated in team building activities including the “Gedam Sefer Olympics.” The children also created dramas centered on relevant social problems such as girl’s education and child trafficking, and developed leadership and interpersonal skills while leading and interacting in small groups. Several field trips were provided to the youth for the purpose of experiencing education off-site and hands-on learning opportunities. For most of the children, these visits to the Addis Ababa University Ethnography Museum (July 15th, 2008), the Natural Science Museum (July 22nd, 2008) and the Natural History Museum (July 29th, 2008), provided their first opportunities to directly view pieces of Ethiopian history and culture and feel a connection to the broader community.



100 children sing songs and perform a program in English for teachers in the Gedam Sefer community of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

During the five weeks of programming, youth spent time creating and practicing drama and songs. Traditional English songs such as Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes, The Hokey Pokey, and Row, Row, Row Your Boat were used as classroom examples for learning new English words. The program concluded with the youth presenting drama and songs to parents and community residents (August 3rd, 2008) and to students and teachers at Bethlehem Community School (August 6th, 2008).

The SLP functioned with the notion that providing youth with the opportunity for healthy relationships with caring adults is a strong preventive factor for children who are at-risk due to the ill effects of poverty. Relationships were fostered through a democratic classroom that allowed students to have a voice in matters of importance, and through daily recreational activities and team sports. This was the first year for such a project in the Gedam Sefer community. Future programming goals include the expansion of the voluntary program staff, greater access to kinesthetic learning opportunities such as yard space and larger classrooms, more exposure to arts and media, and a more direct focus on child welfare concerns.



Social work student, Richelle Haines, listens to children in Gedam Sefer