

PHOTOS: Naples-area teacher returns from educational mission to Africa

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RYAN JOBE SEACREST COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

Math teacher Ryan Jobe works with sixth-graders in his advanced math class at Seacrest Country Day School in Naples. With a grant from Seacrest, Jobe spent his summer in Tanzania and Kenya educating residents on AIDS and HIV, teaching math and coaching a basketball team. David Albers/ Staff

NAPLES — When Ryan Jobe shows photos from his summer vacation, people are very interested.

There's the photo he has of the lion or the one he has of the zebra.

But the ones that stand out are the photos of Jobe, 25, with a group of smiling kindergartners giving him a thumbs-up or surrounded by tall Africans in blue basketball gear.

Jobe, a math teacher at Seacrest Country Day School, spent his summer living and working in Africa.

Jobe spent about a month and a half in Africa, working in Arusha, Tanzania, with an AIDS and HIV awareness program. He also spent time in Nairobi, Kenya, teaching math and English to Maasai children at the Nairobi Language Institute. The Maasai is an ethnic group of semi-nomadic people who live in Kenya.

"It was something I have wanted to do for a while," he said of his decision to go to Africa to teach.

Jobe was able to go to Africa and work as a result of a Teaching Excellence Endowment gift. The endowment was established by Seacrest Country Day School in 1999 as a result of a \$250,000 gift to the school. Seacrest Country Day School does not touch the principal, but rather uses the interest from the investment to give awards to teachers.

When announced, Head of School Lynne Powell estimated the school would have about \$15,000 annually to fund proposals of teachers.

In addition to Jobe's proposal, the school also funded Candy Lile's plan to pursue a master of science degree and Middy Raffaldini's idea to explore the Linda Mood Bell process of reading.

To be considered for the gift, teachers and teaching assistants have to apply and demonstrate how they will use the gift to support their educational vision and benefit the Seacrest students and greater school community.

"The proposals contain endless possibilities to bring back learning opportunities to our students," Powell said. "Ryan is giving of himself and giving our students a knowledge of what is going on in a place they might never visit. And direct knowledge is different than teaching students something from a book."

Powell said part of the school's mission is to teach its students that they aren't only responsible for themselves, but for their brothers and sisters around the world.

Powell said Jobe is not the first teacher Seacrest has sent to study outside of the country. She said the school sent a music teacher to study in Italy. Jobe is, however, the first teacher to go to Africa in the program.

In Arusha, Jobe worked as a volunteer with the Malezi AIDS Care Awareness Organization, which brings HIV and AIDS awareness to local schools and villagers.

"I have enjoyed the work, however it has been frustrating at times," he wrote in an e-mail to family and friends. "It is staggering to hear the misconceptions about HIV down here ... It is very challenging at times, mainly because of the vast cultural differences. ... I am trying very hard on my Swahili."

While in Africa, Jobe lived with local families, eating the food they ate and spending time with them.

"It is remarkable the relationships and connections that can develop in such a short period of time. I will never forget this incredible family and I know I will return to my 'Tanzanian home' someday," he wrote.

Once in Nairobi, Jobe began work at a school in Kawangware, a slum of Nairobi. He said the school offered the students an opportunity to escape their situation for a while.

"They love to come to school," he said. "And they are very bright. A lot of them realize that education is the key. They see the adults in the slum, sitting around, sniffing glue to get high, and they know they don't want to be on that path."

While in Nairobi, Jobe also started Basketball Without Boundaries, a program that teaches African students how to play basketball and provides them with a venue to do it. The idea came to Jobe while walking the hour to school each morning and noticed very tall Kenyans who were walking to school in red vests.

"That morning I decided to speak to them about their school and if they play basketball," he said. "We ran clinics with area schools. There was a big warehouse near several of the schools, and for \$20 American, you could rent it for three hours. The kids from the schools could walk to it."

Jobe coached several students from the Sud Academy. Although he had to leave before the tournament finished, he said his team got second place.

"A lot of the kids were refugees from the Sudan. Many of them had lost their families," he said. "Basketball was very foreign to them, but they took to it quickly. I loved it. I couldn't get enough."

Jobe said his time in Africa made him appreciate what he has at Seacrest.

"Their education is limitless, compared to other students around the world," he said.

The trip would not have been possible, he said, without the gift from Seacrest.

"If I tried to do it without this money, it would not have been feasible," he said, adding the money paid for his flight to Africa and his vaccinations.

Jobe is using his time in Africa in his lessons to students. He is starting a pen pal program with students at the Nairobi Language Institute and the middle school students at Seacrest. He also plans to speak to high school students about his experiences in Africa and elementary school students about life in Africa.

"The students are so interested in what I have done," he said of Seacrest students. "I want to share this experience with them."

Jobe said he hopes to travel back to Kenya next summer.

"It is something I have become so passionate about," he said. "I am so excited."



Math teacher Ryan Jobe works with sixth-grader Alex Kanora on a word problem in his advanced math class at Seacrest Country Day School on Sept. 29, 2008, in Naples. With a grant from Seacrest, Jobe spent his summer in Tanzania and Kenya educating residents on AIDS and HIV, teaching math and coaching a basketball team. David Albers/ Staff



Ryan Jobe, a teacher at Seacrest Country Day School, gathers with the Sud Academy basketball team which he coached for the last two weeks of his stay in Africa. Several of the players on the team were refugees from Sudan. Jobe lived and worked in Africa through a grant provided by Seacrest Country Day School. He worked in Tanzania and Kenya educating residents about HIV and AIDS, teaching mathematics and coaching a basketball program. Photo provided by Ryan Jobe



Ryan Jobe, a teacher at Seacrest Country Day School, gathers with a group of children in the city of Masai Mara in southwestern Kenya where he spent time educating residents about HIV and AIDS in July. Jobe lived and worked in Africa through a grant provided by Seacrest Country Day School. He worked in Tanzania and Kenya educating residents about HIV and AIDS, teaching mathematics and coaching a basketball program. Photo provided by Ryan Jobe



Ryan Jobe, a teacher at Seacrest Country Day School, visits the kindergarten classroom at the Nairobi Language Institute, where he taught mathematics to sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders over the summer. Jobe lived and worked in Africa over the summer through a grant provided by Seacrest Country Day School. He worked in Tanzania and Kenya educating residents about HIV and AIDS, teaching mathematics and coaching a basketball program. Photos provided by Ryan Jobe



Math teacher Ryan Jobe works with sixth-graders in his advanced math class at Seacrest Country Day School on Sept. 29, 2008, in Naples. With a grant from Seacrest, Jobe spent his summer in Tanzania and Kenya educating residents on AIDS and HIV, teaching math and coaching a basketball team. David Albers/ Staff

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