

ClassACT Bulletin

May 2017

ClassACT Bridge Project Updates and other News: From Kenya, California, Ghana and NOLA

This is the second installment of our spring newsletter describing ways that ClassACT has helped to make positive change through helping out classmate-connected nonprofits. We're really proud of their efforts, and ours, and as always, would love to hear your reactions and ideas in response! Contact information is at the end of the newsletter.

Osiligi Hope Foundation (Kenya)

David Weeks' most recent trip to the Rift Valley in Kenya included meetings with the Maasai community leaders and health department officials to assure funding and equipment for the medical clinic there. The clinic would be supported with medical staff salaries and medical equipment by the Narok Health Department and the Maasai community leaders would provide oversight with the hiring of staff and in the future development of the clinic. Once operational (expected Spring 2017) it will be supplemented by a lab, planned for construction this coming summer, which will further the goal of complementing western medicine with traditional medicinal remedies. David writes, "Since dentistry is a need, I am hoping to secure a room in this facility for a dentist office." **If you are interested in learning more specifics about the clinic or helping with funding, please contact David at weeks@glenelg.org.**



David Weeks and local leaders at the new medical facility last August.

White Pony Express (Contra Costa County, CA)

WPE has continued to thrive and expand in the last year, while solidifying its corporate structure, according to news from **Emily Karakashian** and WPE's most recent newsletter. WPE rescues and delivers 5,000 pounds of fresh food each day, seven days a week. Their Free General Store has expanded its services, with many thanks to **Sara Greenberg** who helped invaluable in tracking volunteers remotely from her home in Virginia.

The Cold Weather Clothing project has been an area of focus this winter, providing 7,000 items of new, warm clothing and bedding, as well as survival supplies, to Contra Costa County's homeless population. Other groups held clothing drives for their program, contributing 2,000 items of new or like new items.

Emily Karakashian is Volunteer Coordinator for Mobile Boutiques and serving as Human Resources coordinator for WPE. A recent Mobile Boutique welcomed 500 people and gave away 10,000 items--clothing, toys (see photo!) and children's books--as well as 3,000 pounds of food. WPE has become a leading provider locally.



In the small-world department, Emily reported: "One of our volunteers at the Free General Store works for a big ad agency in San Francisco. She and I were emailing about her volunteering at the next boutique with her daughter, and she mentioned that the company she works for had just done a big advertising shoot, and they would like to donate 10 boxes of brand-new clothing worn by the actors in the shoot. She wondered if we could possibly come to San Francisco and pick up the boxes. I asked **Peter Brooks '66** if he could go pick them up, knowing that he's always willing to do unusual things like that.

"In trying to arrange to pick up the donation, Peter figured out which ad agency it was and that one of the principals at the agency is a classmate of ours, **Jeff Goodby**," co-founder of Goodby, Silverstein & Partners. **WPE continues to need volunteers, including administrative, technical, and management, as well as hands on work at our distribution center.** ClassACT continues to make connections.

National Foster Youth Program needs help transforming the child welfare system



We recently heard from **Donna Brown Guillaume**, who is based in Los Angeles and has been program director for **National Foster Youth Institute** for the past three years.

Their goal is to transform the child welfare system and vastly improve outcomes for foster **youth** by empowering the youth and their families, building a grassroots movement in congressional districts throughout the country, and partnering with committed policymakers. In their view, transformative foster care reform will not come to fruition until people who have personally experienced the child welfare system have a strong voice in the policymaking process; NFYI is dedicated to ensuring their place at the table.

Visit their website and you will find ways that people can help: by calling congress people, sponsoring a foster kid for an event, spreading the word. **To learn more or get in touch with Donna directly, contact her at donna@nfyi.org.**

Salih Self-Development Center (Ghana)



The vocational sewing program got off the ground in a container facility with sewing machines--ClassACT, Lasell College (through classmate **Michael Alexander**, President), and residents in the Baltimore/Washington area contributed to gather a total of 40 machines which were ultimately packed for shipment to Ghana. The Qiagen Company in Germantown, Maryland assisted in the packing of the machines and sewing materials on pallets for shipping. During a July 2016 trip to Kumasi, Ghana, David also discussed plans with community leaders for the expansion of this training program--benches, tables and sewing supplies are still needed--**so if you would like to see what they need in detail, get in touch with David at weeks@glenelg.org.**

Roots of Music, (NOLA)

the music-training project in New Orleans which **Rick Weil** helped found, was able to hire its

own development professional last year and so they are currently working with their own grantwriters. Nevertheless, Rick writes about the charismatic founder, "Derrick jumps around for joy every time I see him," and feels pretty sure that if JusticeAid did another concert in NOLA, Roots would be happy to have the marching band perform as they did in 2015. Rick reported that the director of Urban Education at instrument makers Conn-Selmer, "visited Roots, & offered to help in all kinds of amazing ways." Rick recommends that ClassACT and classmates stand by as areas where we might help Roots out become more clear, **but if you have questions or ideas, contact him at fweil@lsu.edu.**

Rick is documenting NOLA neighborhoods photographically, including the Treme neighborhood, where Sue Press does mentoring work. Her group of kids were recipients of winter coats through ClassACT in December 2015; many of us met Sue when we convened in NOLA for the JusticeAid concert. Her work is part of a study Rick is conducting on grass-roots mentoring in lower-income communities (you can read about it on his website, www.fweil.com).



*Sue Press with a photo of Obama inscribed by the president.
Photo by Rick Weil*

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