

# Keep It Real Newsletter

November 2015



## Message from the Presidents

Hello! We are so excited that another semester of tutoring is up and running. The summer was filled with weddings and summer camps, but we are so excited to be back in the swing of school and tutoring! Our schedule consists of almost 25 new tutors this semester which is extremely exciting. New tutors have already made a huge impact on the family. Seeing everyone take initiative with their students and begin with such high ambition is incredible to see. We will be hosting a number of Real Saturdays and other events in next couple weeks. Stay tuned for more updates! Thank you so much for all of your hard work and dedication!

Lauren Benish and Juliana Warchola

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### Upcoming Events

- 11/13 Tutor Bowling @ Arsenal Lanes
- 11/14 Real Saturday: No Bake Recipes & Project Sunshine
- 11/17 GBM @ 9:30 PM
- 11/21 Real Saturday: Phipps Conservatory

## Attending a Somali Bantu Wedding

Morgan Buck



This past summer I was invited to attend the wedding reception of Siraji and Luley Hassan. They were married already, but hadn't yet gotten to celebrate with their family and friends. I grew very close to Siraji as a tutor last year, and was beyond excited to attend both his high school graduation and his wedding in the same summer. Both events were filled with family and friends, most of whom I knew and who all welcomed me as well as several of Siraji's past and present tutors. I had never before gotten to experience a Somali Bantu wedding and it was an event that I will not soon forget!

Luley hosted a girls' night at their house the night before the wedding and invited all of Siraji's girl tutors and a past teacher from Rochester. Her friends and bridal party were also there getting beautifully elaborate henna all over their hands, arms, legs and feet. There was a ton of dancing and we all got to play with her new baby girl, Rahamah. The girls' night went on super late, so we didn't get to stay for the whole time, but Luley was kind enough to give us traditional African dresses to wear for the party before we left.

## Attending a Somali Bantu Wedding

The next night the actual reception took place in McKee's Rocks and was a completely unique experience. There were at least a hundred people there, and everyone was dressed even more colorfully than usual. Siraji was wearing a white tuxedo and Luley began the night in a traditionally American dress, but changed several times as the reception went on. Her wedding party changed as well and each dress was completely unique in color and pattern. In true Somali fashion, there was dancing all night long and lots of performances by boys' dance teams and girls alike. Everyone was so happy the whole time that it was great to just watch—even if I couldn't keep up with their dance moves. Everyone there was so genuinely happy for the new couple, and the fact that such a huge part of the community was there to support the marriage was amazing. Siraji's mom, Halima, was so proud and her joy radiated throughout the whole room.

Weddings are a huge deal in Somali Bantu culture, and to be a part of one between a couple like Siraji and Luley was such an honor. I have never experienced anything like it, and was so happy that I was invited to be a part of such a happy celebration.





## KIR's Annual Halloween Party

Olivia Molloie



On Saturday October 31<sup>st</sup>, tutors and kids headed to the gym in Northview Heights to celebrate the annual Halloween Party. This year was a great success. We had different stations set up around the gym, as well as lots of candy and pizza for the kids. These stations included pumpkin painting, face painting, bobbing for gummy worms, dancing, potato sack racing, and pumpkin curling, among many others.

Unfortunately, a lot of the kids had Saturday class that morning but we still have a great turnout. Other kids from the neighborhood came as well, allowing us to reach out to other members of the community and raise awareness of what the club is about.

Overall, it was a great way for the kids to celebrate in a fun and safe way. It was also a chance for tutors to spend time with their kids outside of their typical setting. Thank you to everyone who came out and helped make the event a success!



# PRYSE Academy 2015

Alex Clark



As many of you may know, members of Keep It Real and FORGE have united for the past three years to organize the PRYSE Academy, a three week summer camp for refugee youth in the Pittsburgh area. The program is focused on English learning and storytelling through artistic expression. Working as a counselor at PRYSE this summer provided me with so many invaluable memories in such a short time.

Some of the more memorable experiences at camp this past summer were in our workshops. During the first week, locally well-known musician Joy Ike played a mini concert and put on a performance workshop. The Pitt Theater Club stopped by to perform skits with the campers, which in the nature of art made everyone a little uncomfortable while also bringing them out of their shells. CMU's Bhangra team put on a dance workshop for the kids as well. A trip to Plant to Plate on Oakland Avenue as well as a health workshop taught the campers some valuable lessons about nutrition.





## PRYSE Academy

While kids were generally much more excited about workshops and soccer, it was awesome to see improvement in their writing skills in such a short period of time. This year's group of kids had a generally higher level of English than in previous years, giving us more time to focus on creative writing in our classroom time. Many of the campers actually really began to enjoy writing stories and poems, which can likely be attributed to PRYSE favorite, Christine Wolfe's, enthusiasm.

In the final showcase, campers presented a diverse array of projects, including photo diaries, posters, dances, plays, and even one rap performance. Overall, it was a success. Seeing kids of so many different cultures work together on their projects and cheer each other on was an awesome experience. We were excited to find that nearly every camper we encountered upon leaving camp on the last

day expressed just how anxious they were to come back to camp again next year. Thank you to members of Keep It Real, FORGE, and Camp to Care participants for making this awesome experience continue year after year!



## Pitt in Tanzania 2015

Ashley Brooks

This past summer I had the opportunity to travel for five weeks to Tanzania, Africa through Pitt Study Abroad. I took ten credits, which comprised of courses in Swahili, African Culture, and Public Health Issues in East Africa. Making the decision to go was the best choice I have ever made because my eyes were opened in ways that I could have never imagined. Growing up I had this big plan where I was going to go to college, learn a trait, and apply that knowledge to benefit another country in need. So, when this opportunity arose I felt I must seize it. By the end of the trip I had a complete change of heart.



## Pitt in Tanzania



My life changing moment on the trip occurred when I went to the NGO, Mufindi Orphans. It is an organization that houses at risk children and nurses them back health until they can return to their home village. One of the owners said that it took them so long to open the NGO because they felt it was crucial to live in Africa for at least a few years before making any large changes, this way, they could earn the locals trust and learn

about the needs of the community. They felt that this was the most crucial first step of building an NGO.

Most recently, the organization is reaching out to HIV patients in 11 surrounding districts to make sure them and their family members are okay. I was able to go out to one of the districts and participate in one of the checks. While I was visiting we did things like carry water to the homes, distribute medicine and food, and sing songs of praise. I was taken significantly by the moments I spent with the families, however I realized that I am needed most back at home. Why go anywhere else when your own country is broken? I already know how my community functions, and the needs that come from those around me. I should take that and run with it. Keep it at home, start little, begin changes, create a movement.

Thanks for reading! Stayed tuned for our next newsletter.  
Until then, check out our new website:

<http://keepitrealpitt.wix.com/keepitreal>

