

Book Drive for Tanzania **- a report by Joan Chamberlin**

The Greater Portland Astronomical Society in Portland, Maine is a small group of people doing astronomy outreach and supporting the programs at Southworth Planetarium. We do mostly parking lot star parties, telescope workshops for the public, and we get together to have speakers or do lab experiments. We wanted to do something on a more global scale, and the Astro Book Drive was a perfect opportunity to do something for another astronomy group far away. It also was a chance for us to really connect with this club and become good friends through emails, Facebook chats, and Skype, as we figured out what we might have that the group in Tanzania could use in their outreach.

Our connection and fun began when Thilina Heenatigala introduced Mponda and I through an email. We began emailing and getting to know each other, and we included members of our groups in the emails. A wonderful friendship began for many of us.

The Greater Portland Astronomical Society does not have any income, since we don't charge for membership. There were four of us who decided that we would come up with the money ourselves or find a way to fund raise some of it. In the end, Steve Innes, Maureen McDonough, myself and several visitors to our meetings donated money toward the shipping, but the biggest donation was from Southworth Planetarium, which donated a portion of their money earned during school vacation time.

The books, DVD's, CD's, posters, Sky and Telescope magazines, and other educational astronomy materials were donated by Lorri Centineo, Maureen McDonough, and me.

After obtaining the money, Maureen and I brought all the materials and books to the post office and packed them into 3 flat rate Priority Mail boxes. It took quite a lot of time to pack them so that we could get as much as possible in them without going over the allowed weights. It was fun to think of our friends opening them and finding what was there.

After that, we waited and waited. We thought those books would never arrive. The post office had said it would take 6-10 days. We thought they might have gotten lost. Turns out it took more like 3 weeks, but they did arrive and in pretty good shape too. I was on pins and needles waiting to hear from Mponda, when I knew the books were at the post office. When I received his pictures, which showed him at the post office and then with the books, I felt like I had gotten a wonderful present. It made me so happy to hear the excitement of Mponda!

But this is only part of the exciting results of our book drive. One of the group from Tanzania is a student at College of the Atlantic here in Maine, about 5 hours away. Because of our connection to the book drive, I also got to know Adelina and to visit her at college. I will be sending books back with her to Tanzania when she goes home for summer vacation. These will be all types of childrens' books for the library there.

I would like to thank Thilina for bringing our groups together. It was not just a book drive; it was the beginning of some beautiful friendships. I will include some pictures of people who were involved in the book drive and our adventures.



Joan Chamberlin – Book Drive Organizer and Donor



Steve Innes Contributor to Book Drive



Maureen McDonough – GPAS President and Contributor



My cousin Lauren, me, and Adelina from the Tanzanian Astronomy Group. We are sitting in front of one of the dorms that both Adelina and I have stayed in at this college in Bar Harbor, Maine, which is College of the Atlantic.

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