



Report by Thilina Heenatigala.
[Astro Book Drive](#)

Astro Book Drive for Tanzania recently concluded with added benefit of life long friendship between Tanzania and Main, USA.

UNAWE-Tanzania is a group of youth which has is non-profit and has determined to take science to the young generation of Tanzanians though outreach activities in schools, science clubs and the whole public. This group of young Tanzanian volunteers started in August 2009 in conjunction with International Year of Astronomy on implementing Universe Awareness for Young Children cornerstone Project. They have been very active since IYA2009 and continue to do so.

Mponda Malozo of UNAWE - Tanzania contacted AstroBookDrive requesting materials for their use. At the same time, Joan Chamberlin of Greater Portland Astronomical Society, Maine-USA expressed interest in running a book drive for an African country and the two groups were introduced.

The Greater Portland Astronomical Society (GPAS) in Portland, Maine is a small group of people doing astronomy outreach and supporting the programs at Southworth Planetarium. They do mostly parking lot star parties, telescope workshops for the public, and get together to have speakers or do lab experiments. Joan Chamberlin says, "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".

GPAS started collecting materials and the books, DVD's, CD's, posters, Sky and Telescope magazines, and other educational astronomy materials were donated by Lorri Centineo, Maureen McDonough, and Joan herself. To cover the shipping cost Steve Innes, Maureen McDonough, Joan herself and several visitors to their meetings donated money, the biggest donation was from Southworth Planetarium, which donated a portion of their money earned during school vacation time.

Three boxes filled with materials were posted from Portland and it took about a month to arrive them in Tanzania. Joan says "I was on pins and needles waiting to hear from Mponda, then 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!".

UNAWE-Tanzania has planned to make these materials available to the whole society through science centers, school clubs and for the public by borrowing them online or physical from the office located at Mbezi Juu. Members of school clubs and science centers will have access to the materials through UNAWE-Tanzania volunteers and they will be given books to study for a given time and then they will all together sit down to discuss and share ideas about the book and it's relevance. Individuals shall have an opportunity to read these books or other materials and finally be able to meet with UNAWE-Tanzania representatives to answer question or get clarification about confusing concepts.

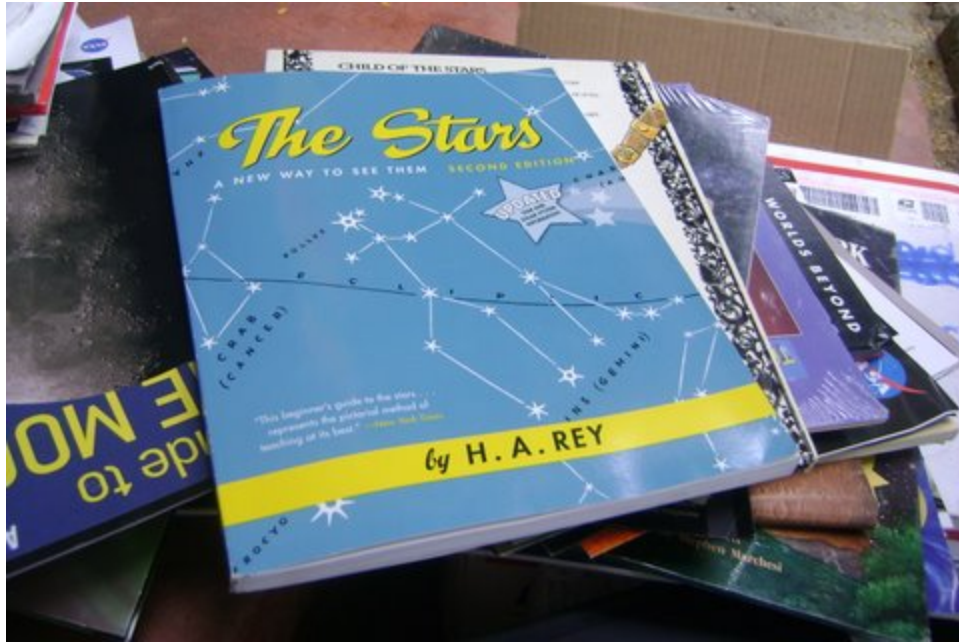
Mponda says. "currently UNAWE-Tanzania will operate in Dar Es Salaam city, but mailing serving of books can be done to those schools which have already been visited by us from other regions within the country. And we will provide the list of all the books and material on their website and allow interested individuals, schools or organization to go through them and select the one that suits their needs."

This was only a part of the exciting results of the book drive. Proving how wonderful Astronomy is, both groups started a strong bond, vanishing the boundaries between Tanzania and Maine, connected through one sky! It was the start of a beautiful friendship. One of the members of UNAWE - Tanzania, Adelina Mkami studies at College of the Atlantic here in Maine, USA. Joan will be sending more books to Tanzania with Adelina when she goes back home for a visit. These books will be used in a library there.

UNAWE-Tanzania wishes to thank Greater Portland Astronomical Society, Southworth Planetarium and everyone who helped for the material donation and shipping to Tanzania, with a promise of making good use of the resources for the benefit of the whole society and spear head the spirit of science to kids.



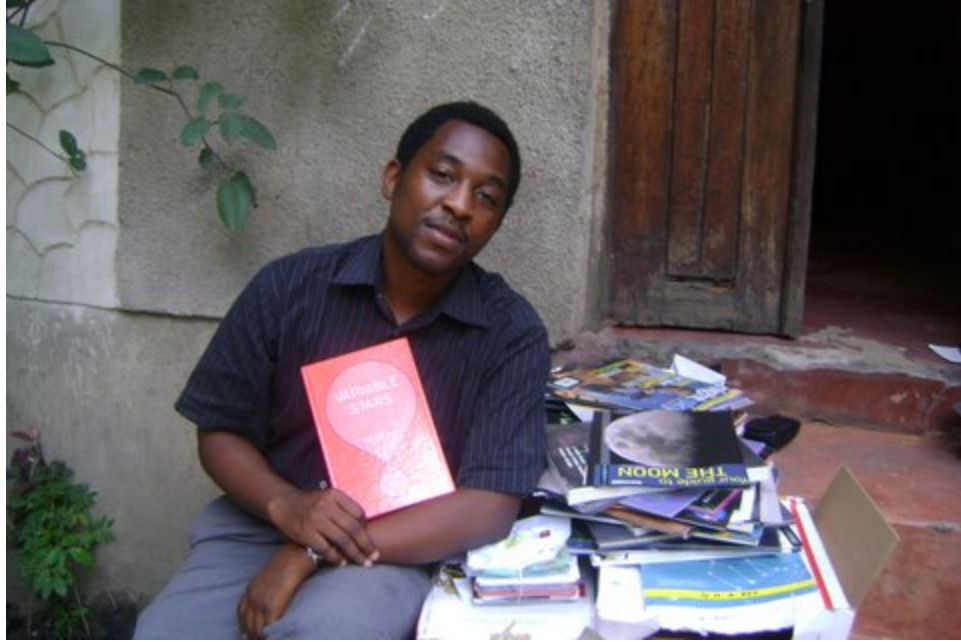
donated materials



donated materials



donated materials



Mponda with the materials



Lauren, Joan, and Adelina (from the Tanzanian Astronomy Group).