The idea for a smART Art Show arose this fall when we realized just how impressive all our students’ artwork was. Over the course of the 2013-2014 academic year, we collected our students’ best work and displayed it at the first ever smART Art Show on Friday, April 11, 2014. We decorated the 601 Tully Art Center with the students’ work. In our fall semester, our theme was “Around the World” and included Greek Pottery, Italian Stained Glass and Indian body paint. In the spring, our theme was “Tell Your Story”, which included poetry, creative writing, and clay.

The Art Show was a great success, and an awesome way to showcase the students’ accomplishments! Administrators, teachers, parents, and students gathered from all over the Syracuse community to see the amazing work the students did. Students shared their work with guests, in what felt like a clubhouse atmosphere. There was also a photo slideshow, which projected some of the interactive activities we did this past semester, including improv and team-building exercises. Thank you to our donors, volunteers, community partners, 601Tully, Westside Academy at Blodgett, Syracuse University, and SUNY-ESF. We look forward to another great year at smART and the 2015 art show!

Office of Engagement Programs

“Doing good for the sake of doing good.”

smART Art Show

By: Maryann Akinboyewa and Melanie Pavlidis

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Spring 2014

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Thanks to all who made this semester great!

60 Mentors volunteered 472.5 hours with Young Scholars and smART
98 Mentees were assisted through our programs
Countless others donated time, money, and other resources to our other programs and events.
We couldn’t have done it without you!
From a New Program Assistant...
By: Gina Tantillo

I was a mentor with the Young Scholars program for two semesters before becoming the Program Assistant for Young Scholars on Wednesday and Thursday nights this semester. Being one of the Program Assistants has taught me a lot. I am studying to be a teacher, and being in charge of around twenty high school students and fifteen mentors each night has helped me develop my classroom management and problem-solving skills. In addition, as a mentor with the program, I recognized that many of the students have struggled to pass their New York State Regents Exams. This semester, when the students finished their homework, I had mentors work with them on a practice Regents exam of their choice. I would like to continue to do this in the future because I feel that the more practice they have, the better they will be when it comes to taking the actual exam.

One of the major challenges this semester was that almost every week, there was at least one mentor that was absent. This made it very difficult to have the students work with the same mentor each week. I am going to think of ways to decrease this next semester, because it truly does affect the mentor-mentee relationships.

Overall, I was pleased with the way program ran this semester. There is always room to improve, and I will be looking at ways that I can do that with Young Scholars next semester.

Share the Warmth Blanket Drive

We expanded the Blanket Drive this year! As always, to help keep Syracuse families a little warmer this winter, we asked students, faculty, and staff to donate blankets and fleece. This year, we also asked for crocheted and knitted squares. On February 21st, about 40 people gathered to create blankets from the fleece and yarn squares. We also created scarves this year, using the same cut-and-tie technique as the blankets. In total, we donated 21 blankets and three scarves to the Center for New Americans, to help provide refugee families with a free blanket/scarf upon arrival to the United States.

Interfaith Alliance

Interfaith Alliance/Better Together fosters interfaith engagement and service work on campus. This year, among other things, IFA helped with volunteer recruitment and orientation, as well as publicity for the 3rd annual Can It event. At the SU vs. North Carolina State University men’s basketball game, volunteers collected canned food and monetary donations for the Food Bank of Central New York. Members of IFA were also featured on TV media interviews to help promote Can It and explain why it is important to engage in service work.
Hendricks Chapel Quilters

Hendricks Chapel Quilters created sewn items for charities using donated materials and the loving labor of faculty, students, staff and community members. In 2013-2014, our members made 48 pillows that were donated to Positively Pink Packages for breast cancer survivors, along with 30 quilts and 8 crocheted afghans that were donated to Reach CNY. HCQ meets in the Noble Room of Hendricks Chapel on Mondays from 5:30-7:30 pm during the regular academic year.

From Refugee Camp to College: An Interview with Khadija
By: Daisy Gan

At the Northside Learning Center, I got a chance to talk with Khadija, a Young Scholars mentee who went from poverty in a refugee camp to just being accepted with a full ride to Syracuse University’s College of Arts and Sciences, who let me share her story.

Daisy Gan: How do you feel about getting accepted into Syracuse University?
Khadija: I’m very excited to go to SU because it was my first choice. It was my favorite college and I never in my dreams thought I’d be there. I’m just so excited and nervous- I don’t know how to describe it.

DG: Awesome! So what major are you going for?
K: Undecided in Arts and Sciences- Maybe social work, I love to help people and support them and treat others the same way I was…

From Refugee Camp to College (Cont.)

... helped. I just want to support anyone who is struggling to go to college or any institution that they are trying to achieve.

DG: Do you think it’s challenging for kids in your community and school to access a college education nowadays? If so, what advice would you give them to get to the place where you are now?
K: For me, personally, it was really challenging just to go to high school. In my own community it was really difficult because a lot of us came from Refugee camps and we didn’t have any food, water, any of that. We were really just struggling to survive. We didn’t even think of going to high school, going to college, getting an education… at all. Our parents couldn’t afford it and we had no idea it was a possibility. When I came here [the United States], I couldn’t speak any English at all, not even how to spell my own name. It was very difficult. These programs gave me so much help and it was a challenge, but I went to it and I hope that other people can get help from it too. My advice would be: never give up, because you never know where you’ll end up if you try hard. For me, I just can’t believe myself, getting accepted to SU. It’s just so incredible- I’m a senior now, I speak English perfectly, I did my SATs perfectly, and I’m like, “How did it happen?” It’s unbelievable. I know anyone can do it if I can do it. So I’m telling them: keep working hard and eventually you’ll achieve your goal.

DG: That’s incredible advice. You mentioned you were brought up in a refugee camp before… Would you mind sharing what country you came from and what it was like growing up in the camp?
K: I was born in Kenya, my native country is Somalia. So I never have seen my own country. I was born in Kenya, the camp was Dadaab, and the village was Ifo. Dadaab is kind of like the state or capital. The situation was very difficult. I was a child, I learned all I knew from my mom and dad. Never thought I’d end up in the United States and get these opportunities like I have today. I never, ever imagined going to college, going to high school, I could never imagine any of this or dreaming to become something. I never imagined to be someone like I have in mind right now and it’s so hard to choose what I want to be and support others.

When you are there (the camp), you don’t have any knowledge at all. All you know is your religion, your people, your culture- that’s it. And what you have in mind is: get married, have kids, and have a family. That’s it!
Summertime plans for OEP student staff:

“I am going abroad to Uganda to work with an organization called 1000 Shillings. They are an international development organization that works with impoverished women to help them build their own sustainable businesses. I will be working on digital media for the organization.” - Maryann Akinboyewa

“I will be studying abroad for six weeks in Italy. I will live with a host family in Florence and take two classes, Masterpieces of Italian Art and Mediterranean Diet.” - Gina Tantillo

“This summer, I will be an educational intern at the New York City Museum of Natural History. I will lead tours and educational demonstrations. I will also have the opportunity to teach various age groups about the wonders of the museum.” - Melanie Pavlidis

“I will be studying in Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Tennessee on a Work Study scholarship for the months of June and July. I will be taking classes in automaton building as well as watercolor painting to improve my skills. While I’m in the south, I will also be organic farming under the WWOOF program in West Virginia and Kentucky.” - Daisy Gan

“I am graduating in May, so I will be in Syracuse applying to student affairs positions at other institutions. I really enjoyed my time with the Office of Engagement Programs, and will miss everyone I have met throughout my journey. Thank you all for impacting me in positive ways!” – Al Forbes

Find us at...

- Website: engagesu.syr.edu
- Email: engagesu@syr.edu
- Phone: (315) 443-1254
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/EngageSU
- Twitter: @engagesu
- Location: Lower level of Hendricks Chapel, Room 004C (across from the Dean’s Suite)

From Refugee Camp to College (Cont.)

And when you are twelve years old, you are already thinking of getting married and having kids. Mostly it’s just an arrangement; you’re not going to be married to someone you love or anything like that. Mostly you’ll end up marrying someone with some money to support your family, and then later on your kids will do the same and they will support you. For some people, the husband doesn’t treat them well and some people will try and rape you or try and make you feel uncomfortable. It was a very hard situation. Love is never there, that’s all. You’re just trying to get by. I hope people there will have the opportunity I was given.

DG: Wow. I wish we had more conversations like this, about our backgrounds and history...

K: I think it’s something we need to talk about most of the time. Or even some organization to talk about backgrounds, origins, and ways of life because it’s just really hard to talk about it. But when words are inside of you it hurts more than when they are outside. A lot of kids at our school don’t know who we are or our backgrounds. Kind of like, when you are in class and struggling with words and ask questions, they’ll look at you like you’re so dumb. They just don’t know. I started school without knowing a single word [of English]. It’s a hard topic but for example, I once went to a program and we were talking about cultures, backgrounds, and struggles. Everyone was literally crying when we were talking about it. It was so sad. But I felt an emotion like “Wow, it’s not only me”. When you’re struggling, you think your story is harder than someone else’s story. An example, I met someone who had been shot by her husband, and some people were from the streets. When I heard about it, I thought maybe my struggle wasn’t so bad. But the point is, talking about it means now we know.

DG: Thanks for talking to me Khadija, it’s really inspiring to hear your story and show people that programs like Young Scholars at Northside Learning Center make a difference to the Syracuse community. Best wishes for your freshman year at Syracuse University!