

Karamu 2004 a Great Success

November 2004

Africa Education Project's signature fundraising event, Karamu, brought out over 225 people and raised almost \$3,000, marking it the largest and most profitable fundraiser in AEP's history. Karamu 2004 was held in Chapel Hill, NC, on Friday, November 12, 2004.

The evening began with an authentic African dinner. The menu boasted delicious main dishes from all corners of the African continent including Peanut Soup from West Africa, Tunisian Meatballs from North Africa and Chicken Curry from East Africa. Guests were able to choose from an assortment of side dishes to complement their meal. Each dish had a description and denoted its country of origin. Desserts included a tropical fruit salad and puff puff (a traditional Nigerian donut-like dessert).



AEP volunteers serving dinner.

At dinner, Kimberly Swanson and Tara Wilson, spoke about their Peace Corps experiences working as teachers in Tanzania and Ghana respectively. Kat Simon-Agolory, Executive Director of the Africa Education Project, also shared about the

organization's history, goals and activities. "Last year we sponsored 7 young people in Kenya, six for secondary school education and one for vocational training. Now, you may think, 7 kids, that's not a whole lot. But it's a whole lot to those 7 young people."

The show, AfriCulture, began at 8:30 PM with Vincent Owusu and Margaret Wangi as the Master and Mistress of Ceremony. The show highlighted African music, dance, and song from various African nations and regions. The second part of the show focused on the influence of Africa on music and dance from around the world including South America and the Caribbean. Vincent and Margaret guided guests on a tour of Africa beginning in North Africa, through West, East and Central Africa and then on to South America and the Caribbean.

Master Drummer Ernest McHenry began the show with a drum piece called "Mother Africa." Oriental Expressions presented belly dances from North Africa as the audience enthusiastically clapped along. The Rhythmic Life Dance



Orientele Expressions.

Company danced beautifully across the stage using their brightly colored costumes and flowing shirts to memorize the crowds their West African-influenced Egyptian

dances. Zankiliwa African Dance Troupe gave a high-energy performance mixing modern African dances with traditional African dance. The audience was brought to laughter as they watched the Gogo and Ombech Dance Group participate in the very crazy and popular Congolese dancing style called Ndombolo. Durham Capoeira Cooperative delivered maculele and capoeira performances highlighting Afro-Brazilian culture. The audience was intrigued by the dances that combined martial arts, acrobatics and dance. Vasquez Caribbean-African Dance Troupe closed out the show with very memorable bomba and plena numbers highlighting the African roots of Puerto Rican dance.



The lovely ladies of Zankiliwa.



The acrobatic moves of the DCC.

The most common description used by attendees to describe the dancers was “absolutely excellent.” Dara Hall and Monica David served as the show directors for AfriCulture. Dara shared, “It was an honor to assist in the celebration. My experience with the Karamu event and participants was invaluable.”

The event ended with an African after-party showcasing the hottest music from all over the continent. Partiers dance until midnight.

“Our goal was to educate the community about Africa through music, dance and song,” explained Benard Theora, Karamu 2004 chairman. “Despite the bad weather, many people still managed to come. We are very pleased with the way Karamu has turned out and we have learned a great deal to apply to future events.”

As always, 100% of the profits from Karamu events directly support AEP’s Scholarship Fund, which supports the educational dreams of deserving young people in Africa. All the performers, food and event venue space was donated which allows AEP to donate more to its charitable cause.

Africa Education Project has staged several African parties throughout the US to raise money for the AEP Scholarship Fund. The event fundraisers are always called “Karamu,” which simply means “party or festival” in Kiswahili. The first Karamu event was held in Boston, Massachusetts, in 2001, and since that time has been held annually in Atlanta and the Triangle area of North Carolina.

AEP staff has already started planning for Karamu 2005. Next year’s plans includes online ticket sales and another dance show called “Diaspora!”