

February 12, 2007

**CMU SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH SCHOOL IN GHANA,
WILL PROVIDE TOOLS FOR HANDS-ON SCIENCE EDUCATION**

MOUNT PLEASANT — As part of a newly formed partnership, Central Michigan University will help to bolster the science education program at a school in Ghana, West Africa.

College of Education and Human Services Dean Karen Adams and teacher education and professional development associate professor Jim McDonald recently signed a memorandum of understanding with administrators at the SOS Hermann Gmeiner Primary School and Junior Secondary School in the Ghanaian village of Tema. Under the agreement, CMU will support the school's science education program — particularly through contributions of supplies and equipment — as the school's leaders inform McDonald of their needs.



Courtesy photo

McDonald, a veteran science educator who served as the faculty coordinator for seven CMU students who completed their student teaching experience in Tema during the fall semester, said the school's needs came to light during the group's time there. He realized the school's need for science supplies after Jason Lacy, one of the student teachers, cleaned and reorganized its science laboratory as his service-learning project.

“They need posters of the periodic table, the water and rock cycles, and atomic structure; equipment for the laboratory; science books; and more,” McDonald said. “They don't have a lot of equipment to do hands-on, inquiry-based science, which is where science is heading.”

McDonald, who also heads CMU's Great Explorations in Math and Science Center, said the GEMS Center and the university's National Science Teachers Association student organization will be instrumental in the partnership, as will the teacher education and professional development department.

— continued —

Lacy, a St. Clair Shores native who completed his degree in December but opted to remain in Tema to serve as a full-time SOS science teacher until April, will assist with the partnership by assessing the lab's inventory and providing McDonald with a list of needed equipment and supplies.

"I decided to stay in Ghana to help the Junior Secondary School kids pass their entrance exams for Senior Secondary School," he said. "A quality high school education is not given freely to everyone in Ghana. It is earned through dedication to one's studies and classes."

In addition, Lacy, who called his experience in Ghana "extremely rewarding," is helping institute important changes at the school.

"I am introducing how to use technology in the classrooms for the teachers," he said. I also reorganized the science lab so teachers at all grade levels can easily access and use the science equipment for their students. Students did not have practicals before I came here, and now students in both the Primary and Junior Secondary classes are coming to the lab for science. Students have enjoyed learning science with hands-on activities instead of the typical lecture."

Among the items already collected to help the school continue its active science lessons are protractors, rulers and GEMS guides, McDonald said, noting that the NSTA members plan to seek contributions from vendors while attending the organization's national conference in March.

"The SOS Primary and Junior Secondary School will benefit from this partnership due to the updating of our science classroom resources," said Kakraba Yamoah, principal of the SOS Hermann Gmeiner School. "We want to provide the best possible science education for our students, and CMU is helping us to do that through this partnership."

Yamoah said the long-term agreement also will help his teachers.

"Our teachers will be able to do more practicals (science labs) with the students, emphasizing the hands-on aspects of science," he said.

Financial contributions, as well as gifts of supplies and equipment, are welcome. For more information regarding specific needs, call McDonald at 989-774-1723 or send an e-mail to mcdonljt@cmich.edu.

— lma —