

Role model for girls

Empowerment through vision building is one of the key components of CofA's curriculum. Girls are motivated by exposure to successful women. As an earlier CofA girl said "before CofA I planned to quit school, but now I know that education is the key to life".

Gladys Commey made a difference to the lives of the 26 CofA girls this year by taking the girls step-by-step through the process of making soap. Gladys, owner of organic soap maker Pure Nature, told the girls that she started after graduating from college. "I could not have done this without going to school". During the visit the girls were introduced to a new type of profession; artistic business women. On leaving the factory, each girl received a bar of soap and an invitation to become an intern after finishing school. A promise many will take up!



Theresa stirring soap

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26 CofA girls getting ready for their BECE exam

From 29 July to 9 August 2010, CofA's fourth annual training camp took place at Ashesi University in Accra. Attending were 26 girls from Central and Western Regions, returning from previous camps to prepare for their Junior High School Entrance Exam (BECE).

For nine days the programme focused heavily on JHS level Mathematics and English. Community and student volunteers taught additional classes on nutrition, sexual education, computer science, creative arts and self-esteem. Also part of the curriculum were public speaking, peer mentorship and group work involving leadership development.

Challenges

One of the greatest challenges during the training camp was getting the CofA girls ready for their English exam. Coming from rural areas, the girls were not used to speaking English, either at school or at home. During the camp, all lessons and tests were conducted in English. Grace Aba Ayensu, a PhD candidate at UCT, sharpened the girls' writing, comprehension and pronunciation skills. Pronunciation became a focus of English at the request of the students. Maths was another area CofA 2010 focused on. Strong skills are needed to be successful at school and in everyday life. Walter Kofi

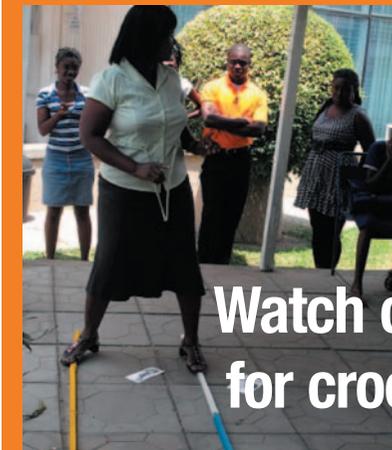
Asigbetse Mawusi, a student from the University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa, in the Western Region, led a rigorous review of fundamental JHS level Maths and in a short time the class improved tremendously.

CofA's 2010 intern, Natalie De Sole (centre) provided valuable support to make the training camp a great success.



Lunch on Maquis Tante Marie

For the second year now, CofA girls and volunteers have been enjoying excellent lunches provided by one of Accra's quality restaurants, Maquis Tante Marie in Cantonments. Upon hearing about the CofA initiative, its owners immediately offered to provide lunch. We would like to say "thank you Tante Marie!"



Watch out for crocs!

Balancing on two sticks 'abstinence' and 'counselling', nurse Emilia used this physical exercise to demonstrate how hard it is to avoid the dangers (crocodiles). At the end is the 'island of success'. Many girls tried the balancing act themselves and were greatly impressed. Before the health class 20% of the girls scored over 80% - afterwards 50% scored over 80%!

Earlier successes

Following the successful training camp in 2009, with girls from Shama District in Ghana's Western Region, the Shama District Chief Executive, Ms Emelia Arthur, promised to fund all CofA girls from the District who will continue their secondary education. The Lower Pra Rural Bank, a bank operating in the Shama District, donated 6,000 GHc for the 2009 training camp. In the Netherlands, nine-year old Yasmin Liverpool raised 600 Euros in 2008 from pupils, parents and teachers at the British School.

Our loyal supporters

A group of African American professional women on a tour of Ghana visited the 2010 training camp at Ashesi University (see picture below). The group, led by professor Beverly Sealey of Simmons University, interacted with the CofA girls and offered educational sponsorship to the six top achieving girls. Professor Sealey has been supporting CofA since 2008 and visited last year with a group of social work students who donated US\$4,500!

From the start of the CofA programme, Ashesi University College has housed the girls and provided free use of its teaching facilities at its Accra campus.

Professor Beverly Sealey and a group of African-American professional women visited the 2010 CofA training camp.



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The CofA programme

College for Ama (CofA) creates opportunities for girls aged between 12 and 20, especially in rural areas, to attain excellence as they develop from youngsters to adulthood.

CofA's multidisciplinary volunteer staff work together across varied professions in order to deliver a broad range of programmes and services tailored to the needs of each individual girl. Services are provided at a single site at a time under one administration, eliminating extraneous paperwork and administration.

CofA provides a safe environment for young girls, both physically and psychologically – an atmosphere where young girls feel secure and respected.

Every CofA member enjoys confidentiality. CofA involves the family and other people significant in the life of the adolescent girl in its programmes. Initially the three founders visit schools in areas of Ghana that are known to be poor. They ask primary school teachers to identify girls with the potential to succeed in secondary education but whose family do not have the means to support them through that stage. They then speak to the girls and their parents to get their agreement to their participation in the CofA project.

During the residential workshops the girls are given extra tutoring in core subjects. Mentors are recruited among female university students, who are trained to coach the younger girls. Each CofA girl is then assigned to her mentor. CofA also disseminates knowledge gained about adolescent girls and the effectiveness of CofA's comprehensive model to appropriate organisations so that the lessons learnt can be applied to similar schemes, and to influence national youth policy.

CofA's designs and delivers a broad range of programmes and services tailored to the needs of individual pupils. Each residential workshop provides a physically and psychologically safe environment in which the girls feel comfortable and confident in developing their abilities and potential.

CofA hopes to grow organically as more professional women join the founders and replicate the process. Already Adzo Ashie, Dean of Students at Ashesi University College, is a strong arm of the founders.



CofA founders, from left: Lydia Bedwei, Afua Eyson Nana Apt.

Get involved!

We have already received some very generous donations this year from our friends in the US and Ghana: Professor Beverly Sealey and Albertha Merriman donate US\$500. Amma Pokuaa Fenny and Joycelyn Azees, two professional Ghanaian women, donated US\$500 each. Lower Pra Rural Bank again donated GHc 1000 towards the cost of this year's camp. We also received generous donations in the form of breakfast beverages and snacks from Cadbury Ghana.

What you can do now

The 2010 CofA girls will be sitting their BECE exams in March 2011. They need resources to prepare them for their exams and you can help them! Email lbedwei@yahoo.co.uk, our treasurer, with your pledges

Getting in touch is easy

By email: info@cofa-foundation.org
By phone: +44 20 8670 8585 (UK) or +233 264452060 (Ghana).

A helping hand

That there is a lot of work happening behind the scenes at CofA will not come as a surprise. This year, CofA was fortunate to have Natalie De Sole (pictured on the previous page), a graduate social work student from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, who assisted with the running CofA's office, co-ordinating training activities and carrying out an impact survey, all as part of her three-month internship. Natalie did a great job and was very much liked by the girls and volunteers.