



Kiwanis®
PALO ALTO



Dear Members,

This month's newsletter reports on OliveSeed Foundation, a nonprofit established by club member, Barb Mackraz, and supported by our Foundation. OliveSeed promotes quality education in rural communities in Morocco and Kenya. A by-product of the education is activism in the areas of environmental sustainability, community empowerment and a first in their family pathway to higher education.

OliveSeed Foundation: a small nonprofit with a large footprint

—by Barb Mackraz, member of the Kiwanis Club of Palo Alto

OliveSeed is a 501(c)3 with a mission of igniting literacy and environmental stewardship in the next generation. We primarily work with Amazigh (Berber) communities in rural Morocco and with Maasai communities in Kenya. Both are indigenous populations with much to share but marginalized in their own land. Everything is done through collaboration and long-lasting relationships with local teachers, conservationists, and community leaders.

I began this in 2014 as Morocco Library Project (MLP) and have since developed over 50 class libraries at public high schools, the first public English library in rural Morocco, and 2 Dar Shabab (youth center) libraries with the Peace Corps. All are in remote areas that had never had a library of any kind, and this evolved to a transformative network of after-school reading clubs. Many of these students are the children of former nomads and now going to university, a dramatic change in one generation. MLP quickly expanded to project-based learning, including environmental projects, preservation of oral tales, and a national Short Story Competition. The impact on girls is profound.

In 2017, we founded OliveSeed to encompass MLP and other programs, with the philosophy of “planting a seed of peace.” We expanded to the Maasai Mara in Kenya, one of the most wildlife-rich regions of the world. Here, we support literacy, girls' education, and youth conservation leadership. We have developed libraries and wildlife resources at Mara Girls Leadership School, brought “solar home libraries” to families living without power, and renovated the only community center in the region. In 2021, we established a learning resource center at Talek Primary, a bare-bones public school. OliveSeed is co-registered as a community-based nonprofit in Kenya.

Our next goal is to add two more learning resource centers at public schools greatly in need in the Maasai Mara, based on the successful model of our project at Talek Primary.

Whether it's environmental sustainability, global citizenship, social and gender equity, or community empowerment, we believe quality education is the foundation for positive change.

www.oliveseed.org
www.morocolibraries.org

Next Month: Neighbors Abroad



Talek Primary School Learning Resource Center, 1st in the region. Teachers are calling this a “Hub of Transformation.”



Faces of Morocco Library Project (MLP)

