

Mpilo Lwazi Friendship/Fundraising Project

A group of SUNY Old Westbury students, faculty and alumni, coordinated by Dr. Becke Kalmans of the Politics, Economics and Society Department, has initiated a Friendship/Fundraising Project with Jarvis Gqamlana Primary School in New Brighton Township, South Africa. It carries on a long-standing tradition that our college has had with South Africans working to establish a more equalitarian and democratic society in their country. SUNY Old Westbury played a leading role in the divestiture movement during the apartheid era, and it raised education funds for the first democratic elections by backing a group of students and faculty who participated in the NYC Walkathon for a new South Africa. The current project is an expression of support of South Africa's tenth anniversary of democracy.

The Mpilo Lwazi Friendship/Fundraising Project is a Big Sister-Big Brother effort in conjunction with Ubuntu Education Fund, a non-profit organization which assists development projects owned and run by the Black South African communities they serve. The goal is to construct, staff and provide learning materials for a Mpilo-Lwazi Health Education Program to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS. Since Ubuntu introduced this program in 2000, Mpilo-Lwazi has grown to reach over 24,000 children and thousands more adults in communities where one person in four is HIV positive. Old Westbury's friendship/fundraising drive will extend the program to Jarvis Gqamlana Primary School.

Jarvis Gqamlana services children, aged six to twelve, from the poorest area in New Brighton Township, which itself is located in one of the least developed regions of South Africa. The majority of Jarvis Gqamlana students have lost at least one immediate family member to the AIDS epidemic, and approximately one-third of them have been orphaned. Yet, there is currently no place that they can turn for preventative health education and emotional guidance. Some of the students approached Ubuntu Education Fund to request that a HIV/AIDS counseling, referral and advocacy program be established in their school. It has been estimated that if the Old Westbury College community and its friends raise \$2,150, they will have their request granted.

SGA has pledged to give a portion of the proceeds of its ticket sales for the Winter Ball to the Mpilo-Lwazi Friendship/Fundraising Project, and students who attended the Multi-Cultural Dance Recital, performed by Prof. Charlene Berry's class last December, have contributed money as well. This semester, students in PE3400 Political Economy of the Third World will be leading the project. A campus-wide fundraising drive is planned, and there is a proposal for a concert to be held in the Spring featuring the South African All Stars who have performed and recorded with Paul Simon and Hugh Masekela.