

Alumni Abroad

Former Alaskan Daylan Arnold at home in Africa



Daylan Arnold (left) and fellow teacher Kayla at the top of Mount Kenya in early April. "The smiles are completely fake because we were sick, freezing cold and completely miserable. But it was totally worth it—the most beautiful thing I have ever seen," she says.

At her school staff retreat last fall, Daylan Arnold '05 spent hours watching wildebeests and chasing giraffes. During spring break in early April, she hiked to the top of Mount Kenya, the second-tallest peak in Africa.

Not the typical outings for a middle school teacher, but Arnold is not your typical teacher.

Arnold, 24, who hails from Alaska and earned her bachelor's degree in elementary

education, is spending two years as a teacher at West Nairobi School, a Christian school in Kenya's capital city. She has plunged wholeheartedly into a life of service, accepting her new lifestyle's joys and difficulties as a grand adventure.

She's responsible for a sixth-grade class of 27 students from Kenya, Korea, Greece, Germany, Canada and the U.S. She also teaches pre-algebra to seventh and eighth graders, helps with a youth group and coaches a girls' soccer team.

These days, she's grateful for the grueling process of producing work samples—a requirement of her Corban education program.

"Though I hated them at the time, they taught me the importance of having clear

objectives, giving appropriate assessment and making modifications for the diverse needs within my classroom. I use all these things in my classroom every day."

At Corban, she was also introduced to the idea of combining missions and education. After graduating, she subbed and taught for a year back home in Alaska and then accepted her teaching job in Kenya.

Right away, Arnold was shocked by her international class of students. They are unusually creative and motivated, characteristics she chalks up to their lack of exposure to television, the media and pop culture. That's not to say that they are perfect.

"Sixth graders are sixth graders wherever you go," she says, but "I can't count how many times a day one of my students makes me laugh—not just a chuckle but a laugh from the bottom of my belly."

Outside of the classroom, Arnold enjoys hanging out with her four roommates, running, hiking, backpacking, camping, reading, writing, music and "anything that has to do with a flying disc."

When she jogs through the city, Kenyan onlookers shout "You can do it!" or "Muzungu! Muzungu!"—the term for a white person.

More than anything, she looks for extra opportunities to mentor her students.

"There are things that happen in the classroom, the grading, the planning, the discipline, the field trips," she says. "Teachers work very hard to put all these things together, but what makes a huge difference for the kids we teach is when they know that we are interested in spending time with them outside of school."

Read more about Daylan Arnolds' adventures:

www.daylanarnold.blogspot.com

