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Tanzania teachers gather ideas in Erie to take home

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Abdu Mohamed, left, a teacher from Tanzania in Africa, is shown bridles by Therapeutic Riding Equestrian Center Program Director Kimberly Danylko at the center Aug 6. This was part of an educational workshop with the Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit 5. ROB ENGELHARDT/ *ERIE TIMES-NEWS*

Three African teachers have come to Erie to learn about the American educational system so they can take those lessons back home.

Abdu Mohamed, 24, Felix Nyakatale, 29, and Josephat Tairo, 25, arrived in Erie on Thursday morning, and through today, they'll complete a series of workshops and training sessions before returning to Arusha, Tanzania.

"I get to learn more on how to become a strong leader and how to be able to tackle the problems facing my community and my group," Mohamed said. "In Africa, the kids they don't have access to

education."

The three teachers work in an educational community center in Arusha through Miracle Corners of the World, an international nonprofit that serves young people.

David Wrice, who is a volunteer for MCW, helped arrange their trip to Erie with the Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit 5, one of several regional educational service agencies in Pennsylvania.

Wrice, a former employee of the Intermediate Unit, said the purpose of the visit was not only to give them the skills to teach, but also to expose them to American educational systems.

"We wanted to put them in front of the infrastructure of education," he said. "We want to make sure that all students get a proper education, and if you don't share the wealth, then it's no good."

They began their experience Thursday with a discussion about middle school education over lunch at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania.

In the afternoon, they toured Gannon University's patient simulation center. There, they toyed with stethoscopes and learned to insert a syringe into a simulated human arm.

Nyakatale said Gannon's incorporation of technology in the classroom for students training in health professions is the kind of thing he wants to take home to Arusha.

"It's amazing how technology can be converted into learning tools," he said. "I feel empowered to see how a tool can be used. It helped me come up with a vision plan that I hope to take back home."

The three also visited the Therapeutic Riding Equestrian Center in Fairview on Thursday, seeing how disabled children benefit from riding horses.

"A lot of teachers think, 'Oh, it's a fun thing,'" said Kimberly Danylko, program director and instructor at TREC. "We wanted to show them what we do for students and the benefits. It helps kids with their balance, muscles and hand-eye coordination."

Today, the three teachers will continue their training with technology tools at the Intermediate Unit, watch a film at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center and return to Gannon's Schuster Theatre for an Erie Playhouse Youth Theatre Production.

They'll go home Saturday.

Getting to know the three and their drive to improve education in Tanzania was individually inspiring, Wrice said, because it meant bringing two global perspectives on education together.

"I think they're very resourceful," he said. "They didn't even hesitate at the chance to come learn about education."

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ROB ENGELHARDT/Erie Times-News

Gary Decker helps his son, Matthew Decker, 9, with his therapy session at the Therapeutic Riding Equestrian Center. Watching in the background are, from left, Abdu Mohamed, Dean Maynard of the Tri-County Intermediate Unit, Felix Nyakatale and Josephat Tairo. Mohamed, Nyaktale and Tairo are teachers in Tanzania.