WELCOME TO A4A NEWSLETTER

HAPPY NEW MONTH!

Executive Director's Message:

This year, we celebrate with immense pride and gratitude the incredible achievements of our students. Thanks to your unwavering support, Artists for Africa has helped launch the journeys of some of Nairobi's most gifted young dancers and scholars—and their impact is only just beginning.

Eugene Ochieng continues to thrive in the prestigious High School Program at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. George Okoth and Shamick Otieno are entering their third year at East Carolina University—a powerful milestone for two young men who have overcome great odds. This fall, Lavender Orisa will begin at the University of South Carolina, and Mitchelle Mulari will join the College of Charleston—both young women earning significant scholarships and carrying stories of resilience and hope.

Yet even with tuition support, the rising cost of housing, food, and everyday essentials remains a barrier. As more of our students reach college, the need for continued and new sponsorship is more urgent than ever.

This is a moment to celebrate—and a moment to act. Help us keep these dreams alive and growing.

With heartfelt thanks,
Cooper Rust.

Arts Teacher of the Month:

My name is **Dennis Olale,** an **A4A Dance teacher**. Since joining Artists for Africa in 2019, I have had the privilege of nurturing young talents through music education at partner schools including Karen C, ACK Good Samaritan, International Bridge School Gicagi, Cheleta Primary, and most recently Lifespring Christian Academy. Each institution has offered unique experiences, reflecting the transformative power of the arts in empowering children from underprivileged communities. Witnessing students grow their confidence and creativity reaffirms my commitment to A4A's mission; of enhancing lives through arts programs and educational opportunities, fostering a generation poised to affect positive change in their communities. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity Artists for Africa has provided me to make an impact on young people's lives.

A4A Family Member of the Month:

My name is **Shamick Otieno,** and I am a rising junior at East Carolina University, majoring in Industrial Engineering Technology with a minor in dance. I have been fortunate to pursue higher education, perform onstage alongside my peers and serve as a resident advisor, fostering a supportive community. As the semester draws to a close, I eagerly anticipate my upcoming internship at a boys' summer camp in western North Carolina, a new opportunity for growth and meaningful engagement.
Reflecting on the past year, it has been a journey full of successes and challenges. I am incredibly grateful to Artists for Africa for shaping my path and the futures of countless children in Kenya. It has been nine years since I was warmly welcomed into this wonderful family, and I remain deeply thankful for the opportunities and support it has provided.

Highlights of the Month!

SCHOOL TRIP

The 8th grade class at West Nairobi School recently took a memorable trip to Savage Wilderness in Sagana, Kenya to celebrate the end of their middle school journey. It’s hard to believe that **Mercelyno** is our last student finishing 8th grade in the coming year; all our kids will officially be in high school or college!

SUMMER JOB

George just completed his second year of college, which also marked his first year as a resident advisor—a role that came with its challenges, but ultimately proved to be a fulfilling and successful experience. Now, as he prepares to begin a new summer job as an orientation assistant, he’s feeling a mix of emotions. He hopes this opportunity will help him strengthen his communication and leadership skills, particularly in fast-paced or unfamiliar environments. He’s also looking forward to learning how to adapt quickly, work with a new team, and support others as they transition into college life.

COMING UP!!

Graduation

Mitchelle & Lavender at Prom

We are thrilled to celebrate two of our longest-standing Artists for Africa boarding house residents—**Mitchelle Mulari** and **Lavender Orisa**—on their upcoming graduation from West Nairobi School on Saturday, May 24th. These remarkable young women have been part of the A4A family for nearly a decade, and their achievements fill us with immense pride.

Mitchelle joined the house in 2015 at just nine years old as one of our original residents. From the beginning, her academic excellence and intellectual curiosity stood out. She has maintained a GPA above 3.6, taken multiple honors classes, and recently completed the AP Biology exam, an impressive university-level achievement. Alongside her academic pursuits, Mitchelle has shone on and off the stage, performing in numerous Dance Centre Kenya productions, choreographing and managing backstage crews, and even receiving a Kenya Theatre Award nomination. Her leadership, compassion, and quiet determination set an inspiring example for all who follow her.

Lavender, who joined the house in 2017, has been the heartbeat of the ballet studio for years. Her passion for dance is unmatched, taking her from her early training in Kibera to a full scholarship at the English National Ballet School in London. Her repertoire includes iconic roles such as Clara, Dew Drop Fairy, and Sugar Plum in The Nutcracker and the title role in Cinderella, and she has represented A4A in both Kenyan and international galas. Lavender balances her intense dance schedule with a teaching schedule, all while maintaining her place on the honor. She consistently showcases resilience, discipline, and grace well beyond her years.

Their journeys are a testament to the power of opportunity and perseverance. As they prepare to graduate, we could not be more excited for what lies ahead—and more grateful to every donor and mentor who has helped make their dreams possible.

DONATE TODAY

Would you love to **DONATE** and help us spread the magic of arts through our children?

Visit our website : www.a4ausa.org or reach out via

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"Art has the power to transform, to illuminate, to educate, inspire and motivate."
– Harvey Fierstein

ARTISTS FOR AFRICA