

Travel inspires Mt. Lookout teacher

By Forrest Sellers
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MT. LOOKOUT — Cynthia Kelly endured 110 degree temperatures, numerous bug bites and plowing through thick jungle undergrowth. And she'd do it again in a second.



Kelly

Kelly, of Mt. Lookout, was among those who traveled to Kenya during the summer as part of Miami University's Project Dragonfly and the school's Global Field Program.

"For me this has been a life-changing experience," said Kelly, 55. She said one of her most memorable experiences was sleeping in a tent at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro.

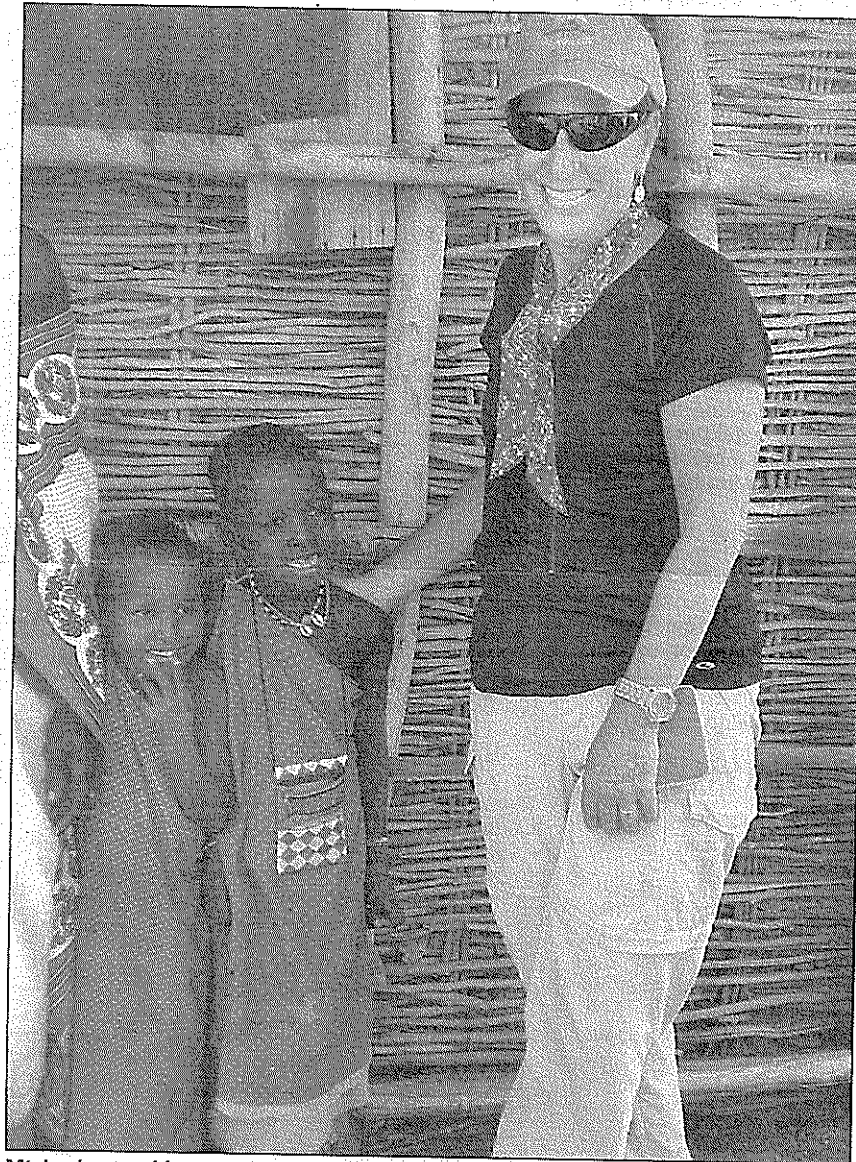
It's not a traditional tourist type of venture, she said.

"During the trip we do (scientific) investigations (and) interact with the local communities to find out how they deal with environmental issues in their own country," said Kelly.

While in Kenya, Kelly visited with the Maasai people, who live alongside the native wildlife and regularly struggle with a lack of water.

She said a major appeal of the Project Dragonfly program, which is also coordinated by the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, is that it involves hands-on learning and direct interaction with a culture.

Her involvement with the program began in 2008 with a trip to Belize.



Mt. Lookout resident Cynthia Kelly bonds with Maasai children in Kenya during a recent trip. THANKS TO CYNTHIA KELLY

Even after 25 years as an educator, Kelly, a kindergarten teacher at Mt. Airy

School in the Cincinnati Public School District, welcomes ongoing educational

opportunities.

"I'm a big believer in lifelong learning," she said.

Upon returning from Kenya she helped spearhead efforts to set up a community garden at Mt. Airy School.

"This came directly from my experiences through this program," she said about what inspired her to

pursue a community garden.

Kelly is also a reading specialist at area Catholic schools.

She is already looking ahead toward planning another trip.



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