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Westlake students traveling to Kenya to create music CD with Maasai tribe: Michael McIntyre's Tipoff

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Michael K. McIntyre



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Members of the Maasai tribe display their wares for tourists just outside the Masai Mara National Reserve in southern Kenya.

CLEVELAND, Ohio — The Environmental Club in Westlake Schools is like no other. It's more concerned with planting ideas than planting trees. The club uses artistic expression as a platform, has released two CDs and a book of poetry and won a national award for its innovation last year from Sea World Busch Gardens. And it's about to go international.

Lee Burneson Middle School science teacher **Daniel Grigson** purchased plane tickets last week for four adults and nine students to travel to Kenya to collaborate on a music project with the children of the Maasai tribe. The group managed to come up with the minimum \$51,000 to make the trip a reality, but fundraising continues in earnest to be able to include another teacher and an expert in veterinary medicine and to make

sure there's enough cash to cover ground transportation in Africa.

The project is a true collaboration, giving voice to the children of Westlake, who are in grades seven through nine, and Africa through music.

"We are not going to help the African people or ourselves. There is no charity or social work. We are not going to learn from their culture or teach them ours," said Grigson. "We are going to create original art and music together."

The students will work with Maasai kids on a new music CD that will be used as a marketing tool to promote a research facility there, as well as programs at the Cincinnati Zoo, Miami University and the Westlake Schools Environmental Club.

Grigson is working on his master's degree in environmental science through the global field program that is a partnership between Miami University and the Cincinnati Zoo.

Next year, the club plans to produce its own television show, following the release show for the Maasai CD.

Go to www.maasaimusicproject.org for more information or call Grigson at 440-840-3907.

VIDEO: Maasai Music Project rehearsal at Bradley Woods in Westlake