

## HOW OCEAN ACADEMY ADDRESSES MDG GOALS

### 1. Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty.

#### BACKGROUND:

- Though Caye Caulker is a beautiful tourist destination, many local children grow up hungry. Segments of the population are stuck in a cycle of young, unwed, mothers having children they cannot support. Many of these young girls were abused by older men. Unfortunately, many of these women do not breastfeed due to lack of education and guidance. When they do not have formula to give to the children, they often give their babies sugar water.
- Lack of money and education leads to malnutrition of children. As a result, 17.6% of young children in Belize are stunted or too short for their age according to the World Health Organization Standard. See data: [http://www.statisticsbelize.org.bz/dms20uc/dynamicdata/docs/20081203112549\\_2.pdf](http://www.statisticsbelize.org.bz/dms20uc/dynamicdata/docs/20081203112549_2.pdf).
- Along with stunted growth is a stunted brain development. We see a direct correlation between poverty and “slow” learners. Slower learners come from a childhood of malnutrition, and from mothers who were malnourished during pregnancy.

#### HOW OCEAN ACADEMY ADDRESSES THIS MDG GOAL:

- According to a report published by UNESCO in December of 2000, “Secondary education also addresses problems unique in human development. Without requisite education to guide their development not only would young people be ill prepared for tertiary education, or for the workplace, but they would also be susceptible to juvenile delinquency and teenage pregnancy, thereby exacting a high social cost. Hence, the challenge to secondary education is enormous. It is an unfinished agenda that all countries will face up to as they develop.” Source: [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001224/122425e.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001224/122425e.pdf) , p.11.
- It is a well known fact on the island that the greatest prevention for an early pregnancy is to be in school. By keeping girls in school, we are able to reduce the number of children born into hunger and poverty.
- Many of our students are malnourished and are in school so that they can earn enough money as adults to properly feed their parents and siblings.

## **2. Achieve universal primary education.**

### BACKGROUND:

- Though Belize offers universal access to primary school education, more than half of each of the recent graduating classes from our island primary school failed primary school. The primary school has a policy of never reporting a grade below “60” on a report card and students are often promoted because of their age the second year they fail a grade. This fact is illustrated by the statistic that 30.7% of secondary school age children in the country of Belize are attending primary school (according to UNICEF). The significance of this statistic is that students are not mastering primary school skills of literacy. Causes include illiteracy at home; large class sizes (as large as 49); a curriculum that leaves slow learners behind; and teachers with limited resources and education. Source: [http://www.statisticsbelize.org.bz/dms20uc/dynamicdata/docs/20081203112549\\_2.pdf](http://www.statisticsbelize.org.bz/dms20uc/dynamicdata/docs/20081203112549_2.pdf).

### HOW OCEAN ACADEMY ADDRESSES THIS MDG GOAL:

- Ocean Academy encourages any student who completed primary school to enter our Bridge program which builds core skills and self-confidence to prepare the students for continuing their education. We offer small class sizes (20 or less); a hands-on, creative approaches to learning; and a determination to serve students who have struggled in primary school.
- We are developing plans to invite primary school students to Saturday enrichment courses at Ocean Academy during this school year.

## **3. Promote gender equality and empower women.**

### BACKGROUND:

- According to UNESCO, 67.7% of children age 2-14 years experience Psychological or physical punishment. In a culture of Latin American machismo, much of this abuse is directed at women. [http://www.statisticsbelize.org.bz/dms20uc/dynamicdata/docs/20081203112549\\_2.pdf](http://www.statisticsbelize.org.bz/dms20uc/dynamicdata/docs/20081203112549_2.pdf).
- One of our students reported to our life skills teacher that she was involved in a form of what local authorities have termed “commercialization of sex.” This is a practice in which girls trade sex for food or small gifts (clothes or jewelry). She was conditioned into the activity by the father of the child she babysat. This activity is not uncommon. Fortunately, she had the trust in our teacher to confide in her, seek guidance and remove herself from the situation.

## HOW OCEAN ACADEMY ADDRESSES THIS MDG GOAL:

- Carmen Myrtis-Garcie, a Womens Studies professor from Colorado, was a weekly guest lecturer at Ocean Academy in 2009-2010 and has applied for a grant to expand women's studies at Ocean Academy in the future.
- Our teaching staff includes five powerful women who promote gender equality and independence for our young women. We discuss Caribbean feminist literature in our English class, planned parenthood in Science class, abstinence through an international WAIT organization, and wisdom of local women through our social studies class.

## **6. Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases**

### BACKGROUND:

- HIV/AIDS is on the rise in Belize. Some national statistics from 2007:
  - Every week at least nine persons in Belize are diagnosed with HIV.
  - As of June this year, 4,130 people are reported to have HIV and 724 have died as a result of AIDS.
  - The majority of new cases in Belize occur within the age groups 15 to 24 and 30 to 39.
  - Belize has the highest incidence per capita in Central America and the third highest in the Caribbean.Source:  
[http://docs.google.com/gview?a=v&q=cache:N\\_uJ5cpic3UJ:www.ic.sjc.edu.bz/index.php%3Faction%3Ddownload\\_resource%26id%3D62%26module%3Dresourcesmodule%26src%3D%2540random47cc3e327c895+HIV/AIDS+statistics+Belize&hl=en&gl=bz](http://docs.google.com/gview?a=v&q=cache:N_uJ5cpic3UJ:www.ic.sjc.edu.bz/index.php%3Faction%3Ddownload_resource%26id%3D62%26module%3Dresourcesmodule%26src%3D%2540random47cc3e327c895+HIV/AIDS+statistics+Belize&hl=en&gl=bz)
- The village has had to watch local residents die of AIDS. One victim died last month in his home.

## HOW OCEAN ACADEMY ADDRESSES THIS MDG GOAL:

- Students are educated about HIV/AIDS through guest organizations, national educators, and through our science curriculum. We have had powerful speakers provide national facts, specific instructions and statistics about prevention methods, and the realities of those who do suffer from HIV/AIDS.
- After our HIV/AIDS prevention education, many of our students chose to get tested at the local clinic.

- Many of our students have read an influential biography of an American athlete who suffers from HIV/AIDS in our English class.

## **7. Ensure environmental sustainability.**

### BACKGROUND:

- According to the Belize Department of the Environment, Belize has no known cases of any punishment brought against a person or organization for damage to the environment. Development by outsiders (from the mainland or other countries) occurs on the northern side of our island unpoliced. With a population of less than 300,000, we do not have activist lawyers to fight for the future of our fragile reef and ecosystem.
- The economy of Caye Caulker is based on tourism attracted to our coral reef, located ¼ mile from our island. It is part of the second largest barrier reef in the world. The reef is designated a World Heritage Site. However, the degradation of our reef is jeopardizing this designation.

### HOW OCEAN ACADEMY ADDRESSES THIS MDG GOAL:

- Ocean Academy was named as such for a reason: because the founders are committed to the educating the students who will be able to save this ecosystem for future generations. We are the only secondary school in the nation with an emphasis on Marine Biology. We took the entire student body on a class trip in May of 2009 to Half Moon Caye, home to the Blue Hole, made famous by Jacques Cousteau. The students participated in removing invasive coconut tree saplings from the island, and listened to talks given by Belizean marine biologists. For most students, this was the first time they had ever been “out to blue” or outside of the reef. Half Moon Caye is three-hours by boat out to sea.
- Sustainability is taught through the curriculum. Students write research essays on an environmental topic of their choice in English. They have participated in many direct sustainability projects including mangrove planting, forest-reserve signage, and sea-grass testing.
- We are developing a composting plan to reduce burning organic waste at our dump and dredging sand for landfill in swampy areas (dredging kills the reef).
- Ocean Academy’s tagline is: “Preserving our Heritage. Building our Future.” The future of sustainability on Caye Caulker begins with the students of Ocean Academy.

## **8. Develop a global partnership for development.**

### BACKGROUND:

- Caye Caulker has become an international destination, but the local role has been one of host and not as a partner.

### HOW OCEAN ACADEMY ADDRESSES THIS MDG GOAL:

- Ocean Academy is educating our students to engage in the Internet and with youth organizations across the world.
- Students are working alongside international volunteer groups and developing pen-pal relationships with foreign youth.
- Students are learning how to engage with the world through learning to build a website, and researching facts. They will soon publish their own writing. Through their writing they are documenting development issues in Belize.