



American Friends of
**The School
of St Jude**

SEPTEMBER 2025

St Jude's News



Fashion for purpose: Students showcased their designs, bringing their fashion to life.



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Our American fundraising partner is registered as American Friends of The School of St Jude, Tanzania, Inc., and is responsible for all funds raised in the USA.



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Voices of change

This month, we hosted the East African Schools Debate Championships, uniting students from across East Africa for a dynamic showcase of critical thinking, debate and public speaking.



Microphones on: The East African Schools Debate Championships is one of the largest annual competitions held in Tanzania.

With heavy preparations and the microphones ready, the stage was set. From Kenya and Uganda, to Rwanda, Tanzania, and even Burundi, students came together here at The School of St Jude, Smith Campus. This was not just a normal gathering; it was a celebration of ideas, persuasion, and the art of speaking truth with passion.

The East African Schools Debate Championships is one of the biggest competitions hosted annually in Tanzania that features academic sports like debate, public speaking, and quiz. This tournament not only brings students together, but also sharpens the communication skills of the young East African generation.

Mr Joseph, Head of Languages at St Jude's Secondary and Public Speaking Club Mentor, chaired the organising committee for the tournament. He says he is very proud to be a part of the team that nurtures young minds.

"It was great for students from other countries to experience the St Jude's values and culture. Nothing beats the feeling of bringing young voices to one platform," he says.

Barriers were certainly broken this year, with over 350 students from across East Africa attending the tournament; an increase of more than 150 from last year. Over 40 students from St Jude's had the invaluable opportunity to learn from the best young debaters and speakers across the region.



Breaking barriers: This year's tournament saw over 350 students from across East Africa participate; a 150 increase on last year.

Uganda took home the top prize in the debate category, while Kenya earned the top award in public speaking. St Jude's was well represented, with three students making it to the final six in the public speaking competition.

One of those finalists was Form 5 student Lillian, who was thrilled to be able to represent St Jude's.

"The tournament was challenging. There were lots of students from across East Africa and it was very competitive. When my name was mentioned as one of the finalists, I was really nervous, but I had so much fun participating," she says.

Lillian, who especially enjoyed the debate section of the competition, explains that delivering a strong speech requires strong preparation. Like many of her fellow students, she is an active member of the public speaking and debating clubs at St Jude's, where students meet weekly to sharpen these essential skills.

"In our public speaking and debating clubs, we learn more about how to become better speaker. We also get to practise at competitions like this. We believe that practice beats talent. It starts with believing in yourself, then being confident, and never giving up," she says.

St Jude's also proudly secured second place overall in the tournament, a testament to the hard work and dedication of both the students and the staff.



On the stage: St Jude's proudly secured second place overall in the tournament, a testament to the hard work and dedication of both the students and the staff.

Both Mr Joseph and Lillian believe that opportunities like this competition are important in helping students develop key 21st century skills.

"We have seen many students from Uganda, Kenya, Burundi travelling long distance to come in this tournament. We're already looking forward to next year and hope we will have even more students participating in 2026," says Mr Joseph.

As the curtains closed on this year's East African Schools Debate Championships, the energy, passion, and determination of the students left a lasting impression. With each debate made and every speech delivered, the students demonstrated that they are not only ready to be heard, but are already becoming the voices of change across East Africa.



From academics to public speaking, your donation enables students to access a holistic education. **Donate today.**



Rewiring urban transport with smarter mobility solutions

Meet one of our alumni who's turning Tanzania's biggest challenges into impactful opportunities through his innovation



Bold idea: Benson co-founded FikaChu, a smart electric bike delivery platform that addresses three major urban challenges.



One ride at a time: With a growing fleet of electric bikes and over 1,300 deliveries under his belt, FikaChu is creating jobs and reducing emissions.

Growing up in Tanzania's busy cities, Benson was surrounded by the roar of motorbikes and endless car horns. But beneath the everyday chaos, he saw something many missed; a pattern of problems such as youth unemployment, urban congestion, and rising pollution fueled by an outdated way of moving people and packages.

With a childhood friend and a shared vision for a greener future, Benson co-founded FikaChu, a smart, electric bicycle delivery platform designed to tackle three major urban challenges with one bold idea. They source components from original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) in Asia, then assemble the bicycles and integrate them with their mobile app in Tanzania.

"We kept asking ourselves, what if the mobility solution could also create jobs and clean the air? That's how FikaChu was born," says Benson.

The concept is simple, but the impact is profound. Benson envisions that FikaChu connects small and medium-sized businesses with customers in Dar es Salaam, through a fleet of gig workers using electric bikes. No personal vehicle is required, just scan, ride, deliver, and return. The result? A remarkable 94% reduction in emissions compared to traditional motorbike deliveries.

"A typical internal combustion engine (ICE) motorcycle emits about 100g of CO₂ per kilometer, while our electric bikes emit only 6g, that's just 6%," says Benson.

Earlier this year, Benson took FikaChu to the national stage at Innovation Week hosted by the Institute of Accountancy Arusha. It was his first time pitching in front of a large crowd, and he had just two minutes to make a lasting impression.

"The hardest part wasn't the nerves. It was condensing everything; our why, our how our vision into something unforgettable," he says.



Driving a cleaner future: At Innovation Week, Benson captured national attention and earned first runner-up for FikaChu.

He did just that. Out of more than 30 innovators, Benson took home the first runner-up award validating that FikaChu was more than a clever idea. It was a movement in motion. Today, FikaChu is in its pilot phase, weaving through the streets of Tanzania as the team tests, adapts, and dreams bigger. They're refining logistics, listening to feedback, and laying the groundwork for scale all while keeping people and planet at the core of every decision.

"We're not just building a company; we're building a community. And we're wide open to partnerships, support, and collaboration," he adds.

For Benson, innovation doesn't begin in a lab or a corner office; it begins with courage. The courage to look at a daily problem and ask, what if?

"To any young person with an idea; start. Don't wait for the perfect moment. Fail forward if you must, but move," he adds.

When asked about how he competes with traditional motorbikes (bodaboda) he explained their approach.

"Before accepting a delivery task, we provide the rider or customer with a trip comparison analysis. This includes the estimated time it would take using a FikaChu e-bike versus a bodaboda, the amount of fuel a motorbike would consume, and the total cost savings they would get by choosing our service.

We also show how much CO₂ emissions they can avoid by going electric. It's not just about speed, it's about making an informed, eco-friendly, and cost-effective choice," he says.

Through FikaChu, Benson isn't just delivering goods; he's delivering hope, for a cleaner future, one ride at a time. With a growing fleet of five electric bikes, each capable of covering up to 50 kilometers on a single charge, he's proving that small steps can drive big change. So far, FikaChu has successfully completed over 1,300 deliveries, and in the process, opened a new doorway to employment for young Tanzanians eager to earn, learn, and contribute to a greener economy.

We are immensely proud of our alumni like Benson, whose journey began with a dream to learn and make a difference. He has transformed challenges into opportunities for youth, communities, and the environment.

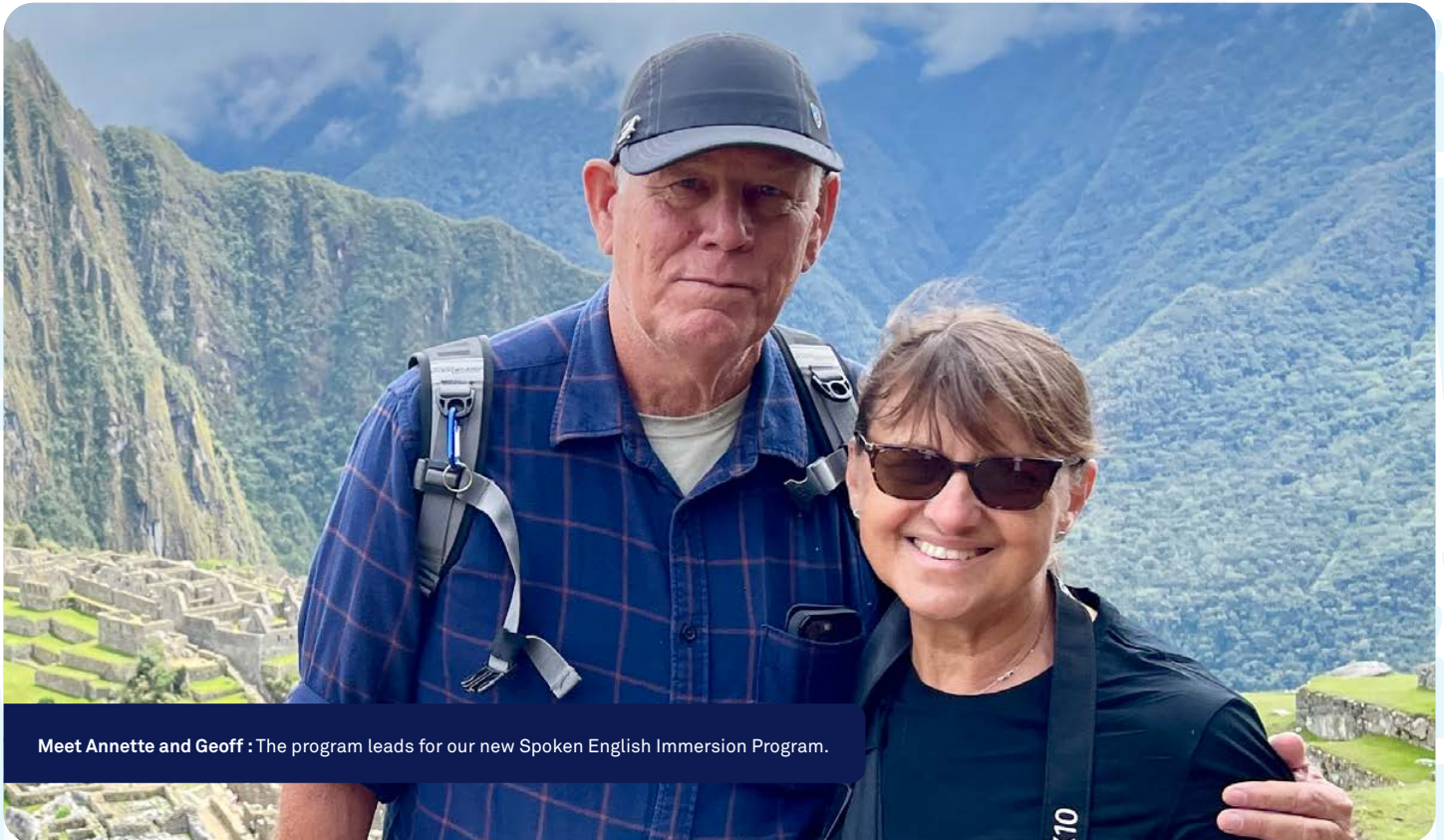
We are seeking online volunteers to serve as mentors for our Next Frontier Incubation and Small Grants Program. Think you'd make a great mentor?

Click [here](#) to apply. Please note this is an unpaid position.



Q&A with our Spoken English Immersion Program Leads, Annette and Geoff

We're excited to announce the launch of a brand-new Spoken English Immersion Program in 2026, designed to specifically help St Jude's students improve their spoken English skills. We sat down with Geoff and Annette, the two Australians leading the project, to hear more about its mission and what participants can expect.



Meet Annette and Geoff : The program leads for our new Spoken English Immersion Program.

Can you share a bit about your background and what inspired you to want to lead this program?

Geoff is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Queensland and Annette is an Industry Fellow at the University of Technology Sydney. We are lifelong educators. Geoff was an upper primary school teacher and Annette a high school teacher before we gained our PhDs 15 years ago and moved to academia, working as researchers and teacher educators. Since leaving full time academia, we've presented teacher professional learning workshops and conducted research on the development and implementation of education programs.

We visited St Jude's twice in 2012 as part of a research project, during which we ran professional learning workshops for the teachers at St Jude's and other schools in and around Arusha. We always wanted to return and support the school, so when we saw that Gemma was seeking someone to lead the Spoken English Immersion Program at St Jude's, we were inspired to apply for the position as a team.





Tell us a bit about the Spoken English Immersion Program and the goal of the program?

The volunteer team will arrive at St Jude's on the 17 June 2026, and after two days of collaborative planning on June 18 and 19 will commence teaching the students for two full weeks from June 22 to July 4. The most important goal of the program is to support the St Jude's students to strengthen their spoken English language skills and to have fun at the same time. An important part of this process involves providing the students with many opportunities to listen and respond to native English speakers.

We believe that success of the program will be reflected in the students' willingness to speak more confidently without fear of making mistakes, and of course if they are enjoying themselves while learning. We hope that the program will become an annual event and look forward to building on its success to strengthen future programs.

What can people expect when participating in the Spoken English Immersion Program?

We will work with around 300 students and 30-40 volunteers. The volunteer team will be invited to contribute their ideas about games, activities, themes and topics that they feel will encourage and support the students to participate and enjoy themselves in each class.

The program will run for two full weeks (Monday to Saturday each week) and each day, each volunteer will work with five classes of 10 students (meaning that they will work closely with 50 students in total), enabling development of rapport and a supportive classroom environment with the goal of enhancing students' willingness to use their English language skills in a diverse range of enjoyable contexts and activities.

Beyond the classroom activities, volunteers will participate in a cultural program developed by the St Jude's visitor team. Activities may include lessons in Kiswahili, drumming, Zumba, and cooking as well as home visits and outings to craft markets or local restaurants.

What are you most looking forward to about running this program in 2026?

We are most excited about meeting and working with the students as well as collaborating with and working alongside the volunteers. It is a privilege for us to be able to contribute to what we believe will be a strong and valuable program that helps students and teachers at St Jude's. We are also very excited about the opportunity to learn more about Tanzanian culture.

Applications are now closed for 2026. Can people register their interest for 2027?

We have a database for recording the details of anyone who may be interested in applying for the 2027 program. Applicants can email us (annetteandgeoff@gmail.com) with their names and email addresses (no CVs or cover letters yet). Once the 2027 program is announced, we will contact people on the database with a link to information about the application process.



You can read the full Q+A [here](#). Interested in visiting St Jude's? Head on over to our [website](#) to see the different ways you can get involved.



Culture in full color

St Jude's Secondary School recently hosted its annual Cultural Day, an event dedicated to celebrating the rich and diverse culture of Tanzania.

This year's theme, "Living Our Tanzanian Identity," was vividly brought to life by our students through a vibrant array of activities, including fashion shows, traditional dances, drama, and delicious local cuisine. Events like this offer a wonderful opportunity to experience the vibrant diversity of our community and the richness of Tanzanian culture.



Stories on stage: Students delivered powerful drama performances that reflected Tanzanian life, values and identity.



Fashion for purpose: Students showcased their designs, bringing their fashion to life.



Dancing with pride: Our students brought culture to life with every step and movement.



Celebrating unity: Students light up the stage with vibrant traditions.



Colors of our heritage: Students brought the canvas to life with vibrant traditional paintings



A celebration of Tanzania: Participants and guests experienced the vibrant spirit and culture firsthand.

Gemma Sisia is coming to the US!



Join Founder, Gemma Sisia and St Jude's alum Dr Suleiman, as they tour six US states this October to share how education is breaking the cycle of poverty



The countdown is on: In October, Gemma will embark across the US, speaking across six states and sharing the message of The School of St Jude.



Joining the journey: Gemma will be accompanied by St Jude's alum and physician, Dr Suleiman.

In October, Gemma will embark across the US, speaking across six states and sharing the message of The School of St Jude. A variety of events have been scheduled for her visit with alum Dr Suleiman, a physician in Tanzania, and many are open to the public. Together, they'll share their remarkable story of how one small school, launched in 2002 with just three students and one teacher, has grown into a life-changing institution educating over 1,800 students across three campuses.

Tour schedule highlights:

12–13 October – Nashville, TN

14–16 October – Louisville, KY (on October 15, they will visit to partner school Louisville Collegiate School)

17–19 October – Washington, D.C. area (The public can hear their presentation at a 10am church service on 19 October at the Bethesda Methodist Church)

20–22 October – Greensboro/Durham/Winston-Salem, NC (Events will be held on 22 October at the Greensboro Day School, another partner school in Greensboro, NC).

24 October – Salem, NH (Gemma Sisia will be the guest speaker at the Salem Rotary Club. More than 400 Rotary Clubs around the world have members who are sponsors of The School of St Jude students)

25 October – Boston, MA area (final stop of the tour).



Interested in attending an event?
Email Support@afstjude.org details and information.