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IUPUI Students, Faculty Travel to Kenya to Help Make High Altitude Training Center into a Sports Tourism Destination

Faculty and students from the IU School of Physical Education and Tourism Management at IUPUI are setting out to do for the High Altitude Training Center near Eldoret, Kenya, what its founder has done for herself: make it a world champion.

Two faculty members and four students will depart IUPUI July 3 for a 22 day stay in Kenya in which they will begin developing plans to make the High Altitude Training Center (HATC), founded in 1999 by Lornah Kiplagat, a four-time World Champion runner, into a sports tourist destination, drawing people interested in long-distance running, biking, and physical training from around the world.

A \$10,000 grant from the Efroymson Family Fund, managed by the Central Indiana Community Foundation, will help offset some of the students' expenses.

"The learning experience for the students travelling to Kenya will be unique, powerful, and enlightening. They are the first of what I hope will be many students that travel to the High Altitude Training Center. The Center presents a great platform for our students to apply what they have learned in an international context," said Jay Gladden, Dean, School of Physical Education and Tourism Management.

The foundation for the trip was laid a year ago when Sotiris Hji-Avgoustis, Chair of the Department of Tourism, Conventions and Event Management (TCM), oversaw a feasibility study of making the HATC, located about 30 minutes away from Eldoret at an elevation of 7,000 feet, known world-wide among long-distance running enthusiasts.

"Eldoret wants to be like Indianapolis, which is known as the amateur sports capital of the world," Hji-Avgoustis said. "Eldoret wants to be known as the long-distance running capital of the world."

Kiplagat holds four world records over 5 K, 10 Mile, 20 K and Half Marathon. The HATC welcomes runners, triathletes, mountain bikers and people who want a quiet place where they can relax and train. It is surrounded by hundreds of miles with dirt roads, perfect for running and mountain biking. There is



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Contact Information:

Rich Schneider
 IU Communications
 317-278-4564
rcschnei@iupui.edu

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a 400 meter dirt track and hills for hill training. The HATC Center's facilities include a state of the art gym, fitness centre, sauna, and 25 meter solar heated swimming pool and a pool restaurant.

Despite what the HATC offers, few outside Kenya are aware of it, Hji-Avgoustis said.

When the IUPUI delegation arrives, they will begin working with a delegation of students and faculty from the Netherlands and a delegation from Moi University. Yao Yi Fu, Ph.D, a faculty member in the school's Tourism, Conventions and Event Management Department, will work on the marketing and promotional plans for the Center, while Brian Culp, Ed.D., a faculty member from the school's Physical Education Department, will focus on plans to promote community health and the importance of physical activity.

Long-term, Hji-Avgoustis said other goals are to establish a foundation to help sustain plans for the HATC and to provide micro-financing that would enable local Kenyan families to make a living offering traditional and cultural products to tourists visiting the HATC.

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