



ELIZABETH LAVOIE, SUBMITTED PHOTO

Greg John filmed his adventures at a school in Tanzania. His documentary is playing at Princess Twin cinema next week.

# Teaching sustainability in Africa

UW grad's film features a vocational school in Tanzania that recycles the waste it produces

By Luisa D'Amato, Record staff

**WATERLOO** — He left University of Waterloo six years ago with an engineering degree. Now, Greg John has returned with a documentary that he hopes will change the way we think about aid to developing countries.

*Operation Imani*, which plays at the Princess Twin cinema in Waterloo next Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, is about an extraordinary school in Tanzania.

The Imani Vocational Training School teaches basic job skills, like cooking, sewing, and welding, to about 100 teenagers who can't go to high school.

But what sets it apart is "their efforts to become sustainable and self-reliant."

The school grows vegetables using a drip irrigation system, raises pigs and has a fish pond. This food is consumed at the school, and some is also sold, to pay the

teachers. The school also sells specially designed bricks that are angled, so they don't need cement between them and the next row of bricks.

John, who came upon the school while an intern with an aid agency, was impressed with its environmental sustainability.

Nothing is wasted. The pigs provide manure for the garden. Ground fish bones and vegetable scraps are fed to the pigs, Sawdust and bits of wood from the carpentry program are used for fuel, and the ashes from the fires help fertilize the garden.

"In each case, they find a way to attach value to garbage," he said.

"It's incredible, the good ideas that are out there."

John went to Tanzania three times after he graduated. He designed and built a centre that cares for people with HIV, working

with the non-profit agency Canada-African Community Health Alliance.

"The documentary was not part of the plan," he said.

But someone took him to see Imani, which is in a rural area about a 30-minute drive from the town of Moshi, at the base of Mount Kilimanjaro.

He was amazed at the school. "I wanted to show this to people," he said.

John filmed the documentary last summer and got a friend to edit it with him. The whole project cost about \$1,000 and John paid it out of his own pocket. He's now a high-school math teacher in Ottawa.

The film is being shown in Vancouver, Ottawa and Toronto as well as Waterloo. Tickets are \$10 and proceeds will go back to the school.

The documentary will be shown at 9 p.m. on Tuesday and Wednesday night at the Princess Twin cinema. John will be there for a question-and-answer session after the show.

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