

today's students



POCKETFUL OF JOY Charlotte Hunter, a student in the IBA program, started a program that's providing meals and medical care to primary school students in Tanzania.

Hunter Opens Heart and Hands to Tanzania

On her first trip to Tanzania in 2002, Charlotte Hunter describes the moment the airplane door opened. It was late at night, so she couldn't see anything, but

she says the sounds and smells of Africa came alive.

"It's very humid, and it just hits you," she says. "Africa is a live continent. The nights are loud!" Though a seasoned world traveler, Charlotte, a

student in the IBA program, was unsettled by Tanzania. She visited Byeya Primary School, where there was no food, running water or toilets for the children.

Charlotte started a nonprofit organization called Pocketful of Joy, which began providing the

school with porridge daily.


Involving local government and community, the program is evolving to include school improvements, enrichment programs and medical care.

"We use local builders, engineers and doctors," Charlotte says. "This is their project, their kids. I want this to remain in their hands."

At age 60, Charlotte is in college for the first time. Her parents, a second generation out of slavery, had only gone to grade school, and there wasn't much discussion in her home about going to college. Her work in Tanzania motivated her to pursue a degree.

"If I talk to the kids about the importance of education and don't receive one myself, what am I saying?" she asks.

At Goddard, she says she found support from dynamic advisors and began to explore her role as a leader, shoes she was initially reluctant to fill.

"I do it for myself and for my Tanzanian kids," she says. "If I can do this at 60, then surely they can do so, too." 

—CHRISTINE TOTH (MFAIA '07)

Thirza Defoe says that having grown up as a member of the Ojibwe and Oneida tribes of northern Wisconsin, "the oral tradition was embedded in my DNA.

"I am influenced by my ancestors," she continues. "I am influenced by the Earth. She has many stories to tell."

Telling the Earth's stories, and the stories of her people, informs all that Thirza does professionally, both as an educator and as a nationally recognized storyteller, actor and musician. Perhaps her most notable achievement to date is winning a 2009 Grammy Award for Best Native American Music Album, *Come to Me Great Mystery*.

Thirza enrolled at Goddard in Plainfield to earn her master of fine arts in interdisciplinary arts degree, focusing on what she calls the "contemplative practice of writing." But even before she has graduated, her work has already hit the road. A theatrical production called *The Drum Is the Thunder, the Flute Is the Wind*,


Defoe Wins Grammy Award Through Music and Storytelling

which she co-wrote while at Goddard, is already on tour, having been funded by a National Endowment for the Arts grant.

Thirza describes the production as "a Native American *Nutcracker*," in which a young girl goes into the dream world and meets her grandfather, who gifts her with music, dance and song. Back in her community, the girl finds ways to use her gifts.

Thirza hopes that, like the girl, she can use what she has learned at Goddard to inspire creative writing students on reservations and in cities to preserve the oral tradition in writing.

"We all carry stories in dreams, dances, songs,

thoughts, feelings, prayers and the wind," she says. "If youth can capture those stories, they'll live on for years to come." 

—LINDSAY COBB (MFA '88)



TRIBAL WISDOM
Thirza Defoe is bringing the oral traditions of her ancestors to the stage.