



## A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue No. 3: Winter 2009

**Feeling Fit, and Still Looking Ahead**

*ITA has reached some admirable benchmarks of late, but our work's not done yet. Next stop: reach 30,000 at-risk youths by 2010.*

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**Arena Roster: Winter 2009**

*Review the fifteen members of the Arena Roster; including in-depth looks at the multi-talented Fall 2008 class.*

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*A statistical take on ITA.*  
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*These are the people who make ITA possible and what some of the folks on the ground have to say about our programs.*

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**Want to Get Involved?**

*You can help ITA reach our goal of impacting positively the lives of 30,000 at-risk youths by the time the Games kick off in Vancouver in 2010. Here's how.*

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## We're Feeling Pretty Fit, But...



Well, perhaps we're not feeling as fit as Arena Athlete Mike Hazle looks at left, at the end of the runway in the Olympic Stadium in Beijing, but we're feeling pretty fit nonetheless.

Why is that? For starters—and in large part due to the support of people like you—it's because we've soared past our goal of enrolling over 10,000 under-served youths in Arena Programs by the end of the Olympic year. But we've also seen tremendous growth in the sophistication and innovation of our programs, as well as in their ethnographic and geographic breadths. Simply put: we're getting better with age. And we're only two!

In addition to the above notable achievements, we're also pleased to report a few other high-water marks from the past quarter, some quirky, some not: all three of the prep cross-country teams being coached by Arena Athletes this fall placed student-athletes (and in some cases, the whole team) at their respective State Championships; thanks to two of our newest Arena Athletes, there are today 75 more at-risk youths who know how to "Ski Walk" than did a couple of months ago (split evenly between urban youths in Minneapolis, MN and reservation youths in Hayward, WI); and finally, on a fiscal note, we're happy to announce that we've secured our first three grants from foundations. Abundant thanks to the Anschutz Foundation, the Salmon Foundation and the Nathan Cummings Foundation for their generous support.

## ...There's More Heavy Lifting Ahead



All that said—and as this column header states—ITA still has a lot more work to do. Good thing we're up for the task, as is evidenced by Arena program participants showing off their muscles and their new tattoos (temporary, of course) at left.

What's the next goal on the horizon? It's no less lofty than aiming to triple our current achievement of 10,000 youths impacted. But did we mention that we intend to do so in half the time we've taken to date? 'Tis true: ITA plans to enroll 30,000 at-risk youths in our programs by the start of the Olympic Games in Vancouver in 2010.

With increasing numbers of families feeling the squeeze of market turbulence and budgets being cut in educational and social service institutions alike, organizations like ITA are more relevant than ever. A recent study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* and recapped in the Fall 2008 *Stanford Social Innovation Review* flatly states that early intervention in the lives of underprivileged children is essential. One tactic the study's author, Daniel Hart, suggests: import the cultural capital of the suburbs. "Kids in the suburbs get all kinds of help from adults—summer leagues, homework tutoring, college advice," notes Hart, "There are really good and remarkable kids in poor neighborhoods who could benefit from just a little bit of that kind of help. We should give them a chance." Just what we were thinking, too.



## Arena Roster Winter 2009

### Tim Broe

5000m Runner and  
High School Coach  
East Peoria, IL

### Matt Chisam

Decathlete and Youth Coach  
Boston, MA

### Nicole De Yong

Cross-country Skier, Youth  
Coach and Community Mentor  
Ketchum, ID

### Karl Erickson

Shot put/Discus Thrower  
and Community Mentor  
Chula Vista, CA and  
Minneapolis, MN

### Zoila Gomez

Marathoner, ESL Teacher  
and Community Mentor  
Alamosa, CO

### Sarah Groff

Triathlete and  
Community Mentor  
Colorado Springs, CO

### Sara Hall

1500m/5000m Runner, Tutor  
and Community Mentor  
Big Bear, CA

### Mike Hazle

Javelin Thrower  
and Community Mentor  
Chula Vista, CA and  
Temple, TX

### Gabriel Jennings

1500m Runner, Music Teacher  
and High School Coach  
Eugene, OR

### Zack Simons

Cross-country Skier  
and Teacher's Aide  
Park City, UT

### Laura Valaas

Cross-country Skier  
and Teacher's Aide  
Anchorage, AK

### Kate Whitcomb

Cross-country Skier, Teacher's  
Aide and Community Mentor  
Ketchum, ID

### Caitlin Compton

Cross-country Skier  
and Community Mentor  
Minneapolis, MN

Caitlin's project has her working with the youth enrolled in the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation's Youthline Program, which introduces inner-city children to the wonders of the outdoors and simultaneously teaches them how to make healthier lifestyle choices. Caitlin views her youth development work as a chance to give back to the community that has been her home for the past four years, as well as an opportunity to function as a much-needed role model for deserving area children. Caitlin hopes to bring to bear her love of nordic skiing and her knowledge of urban communities to inspire the pursuit of active lifestyles in Minnesotan youths.

### Brian Gregg

Cross-country Skier  
and Community Mentor  
Hayward, WI

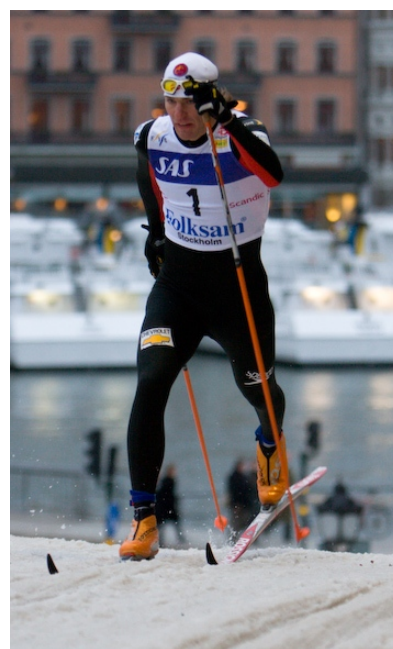
In one of ITA's most innovative programs to date, Brian has engineered a project that takes place at the Boys and Girls Club on the Lac Courte Oreilles (LCO) Native American Reservation in Hayward, WI. There, Brian works with LCO youths enrolled in the after-school program both assisting with their academic work and introducing them to cross-country skiing and other physical activities. Brian states that his "aim with the LCO Boys and Girls Club is to develop a strong relationship with the youth so that I serve as a positive role model of a healthy lifestyle, while also helping to educate and build character."

### Torin Koos

Cross-country Skier, Youth Coach  
and Community Mentor  
Leavenworth, WA

Torin's community work brings him back to his hometown of Leavenworth, WA where he and his one-time coach and long-time mentor, Greg Peck, are reviving the Have-A-Healthy-Heart Program in the Cascade School District. As a two-time Washington State Champion on the track—and as a two-time Olympian on skis—Torin has a hefty resume on which to base his encouragement of area youth to incorporate more physical activity into their daily lives. Additionally, Torin volunteers in Mr. Peck's fifth-grade classroom, adding an extra dimension to geography lessons as he communicates electronically from stops on the World Cup circuit. He also works with the junior high cross-country and track teams to, in his words, mold them into "the envy of the state."

## Newest Additions

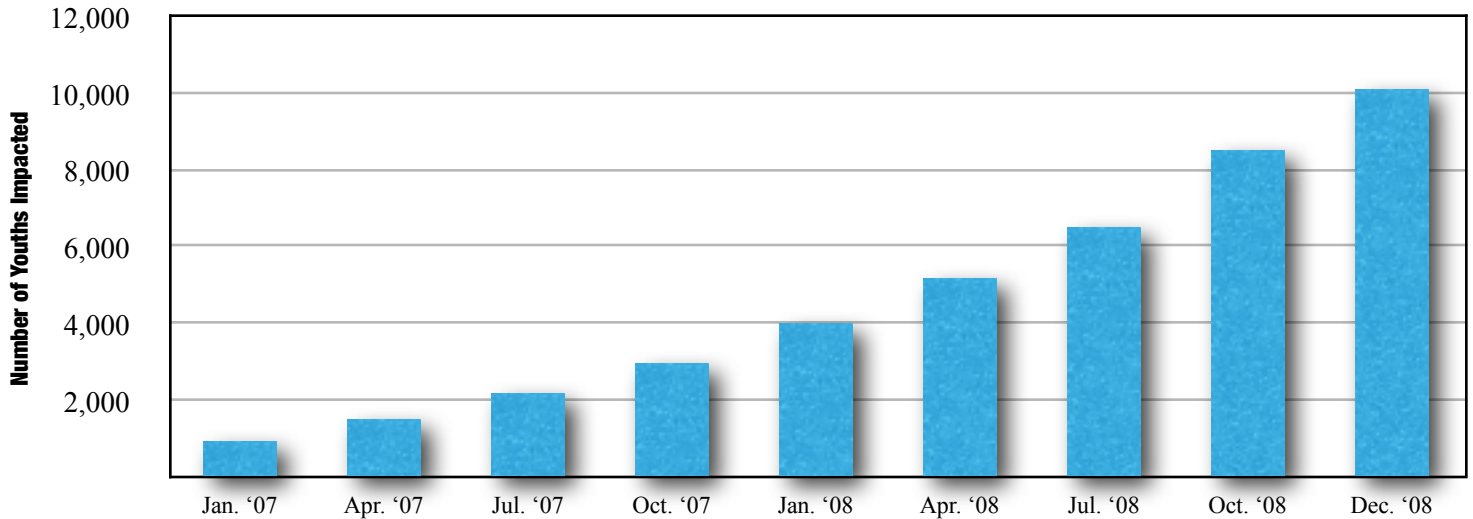


Arena Athletes, counter-clockwise from top left: Matt Chisam finishing the 1500m in the Olympic Trials decathlon in Eugene, OR; Sara Hall at the finish line of the Fifth Avenue Mile; Sarah Groff at the front of a paceline mid-race; Karl Erickson taking a throw at the Olympic Trials in Eugene, OR; Torin Koos cresting a hill in Stockholm, SWE; Brian Gregg getting after it with a competitor hot on his heels; Caitlin Compton at the start gate.

## By the Numbers

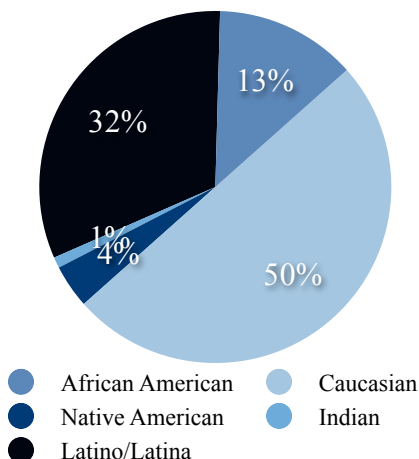
Given that ITA is —in a blatant bout of borrowing from the syntax of our founding fathers —an organization *of* athletes, *by* athletes and *for* the leveraging of the redemptive power *of* athletics, it stands to reason that we're committed to applying athletic principles —namely meticulous goal-setting and progress-analysis —to our work. Hence the below page, on which you'll find a graph displaying our annual growth rate using the metric of "Number of Youths Impacted" (near below), and three charts offering unique looks at the demographics of Arena program participants (far below). We're in possessin of more data, too; and we're sure you're hungry for some of them. So let us know how you'd like us to parse and present them in future newsletters for your —and our —ongoing edification.

**In the Arena's Quarterly Annual Growth Rate from Incorporation through Year-End 2008**

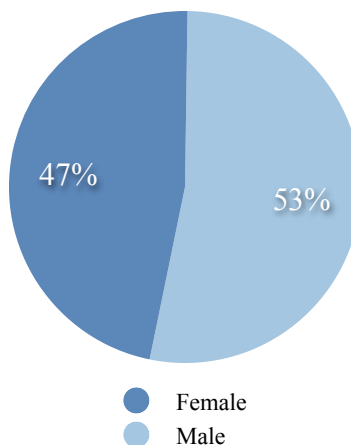


Photos above, from left to right: Lac Courte Oreilles (LCO) Native American Reservation youths sporting new tees in Hayward, WI; sock puppet play at the Boys and Girls Club in Colorado Springs, CO; and Osborn Elementary School students mugging for the camera in Leavenworth, WA.

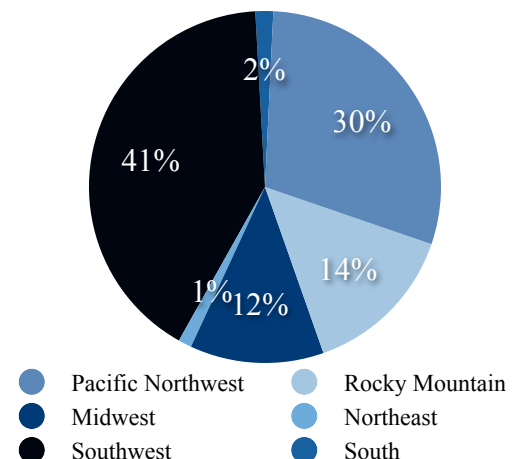
**Ethnic Breakdown of Arena Program Participants**



**Gender Breakdown of Arena Program Participants**



**Geographic Breakdown of Arena Program Participants**





# Arena Project News from around the Country

## Eugene, OR

Gabriel Jennings has just concluded his second season of working with the South Eugene Axemen cross country team under the supervision of uber-coach Jeff Hess. This year's boys' team had a student-athlete place second at the State Championships and the girls' team also featured a treasure trove of talented female student-athletes, all of which bodes well for the seasons to come.

## Leavenworth, WA

Torin Koos' astoundingly positive influence on the students in his hometown is best summed up by sharing a few excerpts from letters his program participants have sent ITA this past fall: "Thank you for having Torin here...I feel much healthier and want to do more exercise"; and "Thank you for letting us have fun with [Torin]. He got us tired and made us run but he gave us t-shirts and he supports us"; and perhaps most revealingly: "Thanks for putting us in the [newspaper] and I'm happy we're on the internet." Just goes to show that we all, even fifth-graders, like a little free press.

## Ketchum, ID

Two Arena Athletes, Nicole De Yong and Kate Whitcomb, ply their youth work skills in Idaho. Nicole spent much of the summer with campers at the new YMCA and allocated time this fall to working with the Community School's cross country program, where the head coach credited her with having a strong hand in helping both the boys' and girls' teams make the State Championships for the first time in school history. Kate, ITA's first athlete, continues her superlative work in Brad Stansberry's fifth-grade classroom, among other innovative projects.

## Park City, UT

Zack Simons is in his third academic year of working in the Physical Education Department at his alma mater middle school, Ecker Hill. Zack's one-time teacher and now-supervisor, Jeff Schwalbe, writes that Zack is a "positive role model" and "continues to be an asset" to the school and community.

## Alamosa, CO

Zoila Gomez continues to be an ubiquitous community youth organizing presence in her adopted hometown, where she spends ample time at the elementary, middle and high schools; at the community and rec centers; and at her alma mater, Adams State. Need someone to give a bring-you-to-tears motivational talk? Zoila's your woman.

## Chula Vista, CA

Both Karl Erickson and Mike Hazle work as community mentors in Chula Vista: Karl at the Boys and Girls Club; and Mike as a roving, effective, uplifting, one-man inspirational band who both visits area schools and brings classes of students to the Olympic Training Center for on-campus talks. Having competed in Beijing this past summer, Mike has grown to be as talented a mentor as he is a javelin thrower, proving yet again that there's no limit to what one can accomplish when one works hard and has the best of intentions.

## Anchorage, AK

A perennial overachiever, Laura Valaas is working in not one, but *two* elementary school classrooms: with a Language Arts class and in a homeroom at Sand Lake; and with the Highly Gifted Program students at Rogers Park. At both venues she mentors, tutors, presents and generally proves herself to be indispensable. Talented though the students are, Laura writes that "they're hardly too cool to be influenced" as is evidenced by the fact that one recently joined USSA and sported his US Ski Team t-shirt to class to show Laura.



### Minneapolis, MN

Working under the umbrella of the Youthline Program, Caitlin Compton has quickly established herself as a welcome part of the routine with the after-school participants at Sibley Park. Recent activities have included Ski Walking, ice cream making and even some math tutoring (Caitlin cops to having to brush up on her multiplication tables for the latter). With grants for ski equipment pending and Minneapolis possibly hosting the 2011 World Junior Championships for cross-country skiing, Caitlin hopes to get her program participants on the skinny boards this winter.

### Hayward, WI

Brian Gregg has launched ITA's first-ever project on a Native American reservation; and due in large part to his remarkable enthusiasm and the long hours he's committed, it has been a tremendous success. Brian is the proverbial jack of all trades at the community center: mentor, instructor, tutor and companion. Perhaps all are captured in this comment left by a program participant on Brian's blog: "Hey Brian this is me Brandon I hope you have a great ski trip it will be fun when you come back and when you come back I will give you a great big hug."

### Boston, MA

In his second year of coaching with the estimable Curtis Jackman at the Cambridge Jets Youth Track Club, Matt has worked to implement a study group alongside the bi-weekly track practices and has even recruited some Harvard undergrads to help in the effort. With brains to match their above-average track talent, the Jets are sure to excel in both the academic and athletic arenas this season.

### Chesterfield, MA

Kate Whitcomb took some time this fall to drop in on a hometown school, New Hingham Elementary, where she spent a week implementing a science and technology project that ultimately yielded the students a DVD showcasing their work that they could take home to their families. Considering the lesson involved trolls, owlets, cameras and computers — and a hefty dose of Kate's infectious energy and abundant pedagogical talent — the students were enthralled.

### East Peoria, IL

Per usual, Tim Broe guided the EP High School cross country team to another outstanding season. While Tim's work with his charges extends far beyond teaching them how to run fast — Tim does carpools, takes student-athletes to PT appointments and treats the team to meals — he did succeed in stewarding his group to impressive individual and team finishes. Most notably, Tim coached the first freshman in EP history to a berth at the State Championships. That runner, Kevin Eades, recorded an impressive 15:42 at the mid-Illini Conference Meet. Only one other freshman in history has run faster on that course. Who? Yup, you guessed it: Tim Broe back in 1991. It will be fun to see to what heights he pushes that same group next season; and as Tim always signs off on his blog: GO RAIDERS!

### Colorado Springs, CO

Sarah Groff's work at the Tutt branch Boys and Girls Club has been so successful that the staff is lobbying to get her to agree to full-time employment. Her most recent activity with her kiddos — making sock puppets — was such a hit that she ran out of socks and had to promise to bring more next time. Now there's a good use for that overflowing sock drawer all athletes undoubtedly have.

### Temple, TX

Post-Olympics, Mike Hazle returned to his hometown for —nope, not a little R&R —but some youth work in the local elementary school, specifically with the class of sixth-graders to whom his father teaches science. Mike also took some time to talk to his alma mater high school's football team; there's nothing like the tagline "Olympian" to lend gravitas to one's message. Oh yeah, he met the Governor at the state capitol, too.



**Abundant thanks to the supporters at right, those people and institutions whose time, enthusiasm, investments and wisdom make the accompanying testimonials possible.**

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Boys and Girls Club of CO Springs  
Boys and Girls Club of Metro Denver

Boys and Girls Club of Santa Monica  
Boys and Girls Club of S. Minneapolis  
Cambridge Jets Youth Track Club  
Cascade School District  
Chula Vista Junior High School  
Chula Vista Public Libraries  
Del Norte High School  
Eastlake Community Church  
Eastlake Middle School  
Eastlake Youth Track Club  
East Peoria Regional High School  
Ecker Hill International Middle School  
Eugene South High School  
Hemingway Elementary School  
Heritage Community Center  
Hillcrest Elementary School  
Lac Courte Oreilles Native American Reservation  
La Mesa Intergenerational Games  
Mammoth Elementary School  
Orange Coast College  
Ortega Middle School  
Rolling Readers  
Salt Creek Community Center  
Sand Lake Elementary School  
SLV Immigrant Resource Center  
South Bay Family Crisis Center  
Sunset Hills Elementary School  
The John Cooper School  
Tiffany Elementary School  
Valley Vista Elementary School  
Woodland Park Middle School  
Wood River YMCA  
Youthline Programs  
Zuni High School



Above, from left to right: Students in Ketchum, ID participating in an Arena Athlete-supervised physical fitness challenge; a bit of chalk and asphalt encouragement; Arena Athlete Sara Hall and her husband, US Olympic marathoner Ryan Hall, in Zambia with Team World Vision, an international Christian humanitarian organization, this October.

## Testimonials from the Field

Karl [Erickson] understands the importance of being a positive role model for the youth here at the club and is willing to go that extra mile to help them out. He also has the ability to build great relationships with the kids...One example of [this] is with one eight-year old girl, Akyra. After Karl read a book with her the first day he was here, she now waits every day for Karl to arrive so they can read a chapter of the book together.

-Luke Sargent, Education Director at Southside Village Boys and Girls Club  
Minneapolis, MN

Over the past year Mike [Hazle] has been an inspiration to children participating in the Chula Vista Elementary School District's Exercise the Dream Program...The goal is to inspire students to lead healthy and active lives using Olympic athletes as role models...and that is what Mike is to our students: a wonderful role model and hero!

-Sharon Hillidge, Teacher in the Chula Vista Elementary School District  
Chula Vista, CA

Sarah [Groff] is great with all the kids and staff. Everyone loves her. We don't know what we'd do without her. Wish we had her full time.

-Marcus, Supervisor at the Tutt Branch Boys and Girls Club  
Colorado Springs, CO

Torin [Koos] has done an excellent job both as a coach and as an instructor in the classroom...He brings an excitement and energy to not only the classroom but the entire school when he is here...He truly does lead by example. This is a great program for our youth, school and community.

-Greg Peck, Teacher and Coach in the Cascade Elementary School District  
Leavenworth, WA

Laura [Valaas] is an outstanding addition to our classroom. She has helped in every possible way here at Sand Lake...[H]er leadership as a role model is priceless.

-Andrew Maurer, Language Arts Teacher at Sand Lake Elementary School  
Anchorage, AK



# Want to Help In the Arena Reach Our Goal to Impact Positively the Lives of 30,000 Under-Served Youths by the Time the Games Kick Off in Vancouver?

Happy Birthday to us! ITA has just turned two and we're happy to report that even at this young age, we're right on-target. **In just 24 months of programming —and with the help of 15 Arena Athletes —ITA has reached over 10,000 youths in 12 states and 15 cities nationwide.** With a dozen more applications for unique projects pending, we're well on our way to establishing ourselves as one of the most efficient and effective youth development NGOs out there. You can help us continue to evolve in any number of ways:

## Volunteer

ITA is always looking for volunteers to assist with various projects. Put your shoulder to the wheel and help us in our quest to give all young Americans equal access to the highest-caliber role models. There's no shortage of work to be done.

## Make a Connection

If you want to bring an Arena Program to your area's school, youth group, community center, recreation facility, church group, camp or club, get in touch with us and we'll make every effort to make it happen. Even though we may not have an athlete in your immediate vicinity, we can —with the proper planning and foresight —arrange to place an Arena Athlete in your community to work with area youth.

## Donate

It costs roughly \$21 to move one child through an Arena Program. With the aim of impacting favorably the lives of 30,000 at-risk youths by the time the Games commence in Vancouver in 2010, ITA would love to count on your support. You're in a unique position to help by contributing whatever you have in abundance: time; technical skills; in-kind, stock or cash gifts; you name it. Use the contact information at right or the form below to join our team. As always, many thanks.

# Arena Athletes: Unedited and Unvarnished

**Tim Broe:** <http://in-the-arena-tim.blogspot.com>  
**Matt Chisam:** <http://in-the-arena-matt.blogspot.com>  
**Caitlin Compton:** <http://in-the-arena-caitlin.blogspot.com>  
**Nicole De Yong:** <http://in-the-arena-nicole.blogspot.com>  
**Karl Erickson:** <http://in-the-arena-karl.blogspot.com>  
**Zoila Gomez:** <http://in-the-arena-zoila.blogspot.com>  
**Brian Gregg:** <http://in-the-arena-brian.blogspot.com>  
**Sarah Groff:** <http://in-the-arena-sarah.blogspot.com>  
**Sara Hall:** <http://in-the-arena-sara.blogspot.com>  
**Mike Hazle:** <http://in-the-arena-mike.blogspot.com>  
**Gabriel Jennings:** <http://in-the-arena-gabriel.blogspot.com>  
**Torin Koos:** <http://in-the-arena-torin.blogspot.com>  
**Zack Simons:** <http://in-the-arena-zack.blogspot.com>  
**Laura Valaas:** <http://in-the-arena-laura.blogspot.com>  
**Kate Whitcomb:** <http://in-the-arena-kate.blogspot.com>

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**Arena Athlete Kate Whitcomb (back row, center) and her adopted fourth-grade class striking poses on the playground of New Hingham Elementary School in Chesterfield, MA after a week of work together on a science and technology video project in October 2008. Wrote one student in a thank you letter: "Dear Kate: Thank you for helping us...I had a really cool time."**