Two Georgia State University students --- Penny Nyokabi and Tommy Springer Jr. --- recently traveled halfway around the world to teach leadership skills to underprivileged young people in South Africa as part of the mission of Usher's New Look Foundation.

The students, both 20, will be among the leaders of New Look's annual World Leadership Conference, which will take place in Atlanta June 19-23, bringing together hundreds of young people from around the world.

The program is designed to give youngsters a "new look" on life, exposing them to ideas and lectures on business, entrepreneurship and leadership.

"It is through exposure to such opportunities that we would begin to channel our youth's aspirations to constructive career choices, at the same time building future leaders in business through entrepreneurship and skills development," says Usher Raymond IV, the Atlanta-based Grammy award-winning musician who founded the philanthropic organization.

Nyokabi and Springer, both of Atlanta, are members of New Look's MIT program, which stands for Moguls in Training. Their recent mission to South Africa was meant to inspire poor youngsters there to shoot for the stars, regardless of their circumstances.

During the March 6-12 trip, they led training sessions with two other New Look youngsters, Atif Hashwi, 17, of Detroit and Jakayla Dills, 18, of Milwaukee.

Springer, a film major, says he got a lot out of teaching and mentoring underprivileged kids and hopes to go back some day.

"I stressed the importance of giving back, trying to help others," Springer says.

Nyokabi, majoring in accounting and finance, says that in Johannesburg and Soweto, her group tried to help youngsters figure out their own talents and gave them tips on how to become leaders.

"We went to the high points of Johannesburg, then we were in the slums interacting with kids," she says. "We talked about bullying, teenage pregnancies."

Both say they are inspired to keep working with Usher organizations to help those less fortunate.
"I want to help people who need a hand," Springer says. "Everybody needs somebody who can help them out, a mentor. It's what we all should do."

Gavin McGuire, who works for the New Look Foundation, says MITs have raised money for flood victims, stressed awareness of youth obesity and are carefully selected for their leadership and inspirational skills.

"They are taught to motivate, to help kids identify their talents," McGuire says.

"The work we do with the New Look Foundation is never far from my heart," Usher says. "In order to mentor youth as global leaders, we must take them out of their communities and introduce them to diverse leadership experiences on an international level."

The New Look Foundation says its goal is to empower, motivate and inspire young people around the world while offering them the tools and resources they need to succeed as leaders. It has worked with more than 9,000 young people around the world and provided more than 150,000 hours of leadership training.

Springer and Nyokabi's group trained and certified about 180 Johannesburg young people as leaders. Five from South Africa will take part in the leadership conference in June, McGuire says. (ushersnewlook.org).