



Canadian Harambee Education Society

We can't do everything...but we can do something!

SPRING 2011 NEWSLETTER #51

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Just last week, Lorrie (Margaret's daughter) and I were invited to show our DVD "Educating Margaret" and speak at a youth project called "ONE LOVE PROJECT". It was inspired by the "Me to We" movement which strives to encourage young people to look beyond themselves. I had no idea what was in store and I was very impressed by what I saw and heard. The organizers (from Dr. Charles Best Secondary) featured local talents which included bands, singers and an improv group. In between acts, they featured young heroes: A young woman working to better the lives of younger youth, a youth making a positive difference environmentally, a young

motivational speaker impacting the world through humanitarianism and an athletic, compassionate youth making a difference in various forms throughout her community. They showed a short video of each hero and awarded them with plaques. At the end of the evening it was announced that the proceeds of the evening would go towards CHES. They were excited to be able to sponsor a girl in Africa. I had never been more proud about being Canadian than I was that evening. These marvelous young people make me confident that the future is in good hands. This is what I hope for the future of African youth.

Lorrie Williams

GOLF CLASSIC

Thursday July 14, 2011 is the date of the Third Annual [Harambee Charity Golf Classic](#). This highly successful golf tournament, co-chaired by CPGA golf professionals, Ginny Golding and April Stubbs, is dedicated to supporting [CHES](#).

Since its inception, the tournament has raised a net total of \$55,000. Last year, tournament proceeds covered 4-year school fees for twelve young students. In addition, over the two years, golfers have individually sponsored another eleven girls.

This year at the request of the CHES board, the tournament's proceeds will be used to support nearly 800 students with additional English language and life skills training.



The tournament fills up quickly with enthusiastic CHES supporters. If you would like to get in on the action, donate to the silent auction, or provide a sponsorship, check out the website.

<http://www.harambeegolf.ca>

NOTICE TO SPONSORS

CHES AGM

CHES supporters are welcome to join us for our annual general meeting!
September 24th from 2-4pm at the New Westminster Public Library
(downstairs meeting room)

Light refreshments will be served as we review our successes of the past year, present new initiatives, and introduce the 2011/2012 Board of Directors.

SPONSORSHIP PAYMENT

CHES would like to thank all of the sponsors who have sent in their \$500 to pay for their student for the 2011 school year. If you are unable to continue to sponsor your student, please let us know so we can find her another sponsor. For our U.S. supporters, you may send your money to The Humanist Association as they forward this money to us in Canada and you receive a U.S. tax receipt. Tax receipts are also given for donations of \$20 or more for student support and administration costs.

New sponsors are always welcome so more girls in Africa can be educated. The next group of new students will be chosen early in 2012.

HELP US SAVE MONEY

In order to operate CHES we must raise funds from sources other than our sponsors. This money is essential but always hard to find. Every year, more than \$5,000 of these hard-to-come-by dollars must be spent on an audit.

This is a request to our extended CHES family to learn if a fully accredited chartered accountant in a firm with more than two professionals would be willing to audit our books in future years for a reduced price? A tax receipt for the difference between the charged and full price would be available and the money saved could be used to sponsor additional girls in Kenya or Tanzania. Please contact the office if you can help or would like to discuss this further.

CHES VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you have always wondered what it would be like to live in an African community monitoring the CHES program, we may have an opportunity for you! Agents usually spend 6 months at CHES house, however, shorter visits may be arranged.

If you would like more information, please contact our office at canadianharambee.ca or phone the office at 778-565-5261

SENDING MAIL

Mail delivery in Africa is very unreliable, so for sponsors wishing to write to their girls, although not infallible, the best chance for girls receiving their letters is to send them to the address below, where local agents will ensure their delivery.

c/o CHES, PO Box 69, Katesh, Hanang, Manyara, Tanzania

c/o CHES PO Box 2036, Kakamega 50100, Kenya

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A LIGHT MAKES

Gisambalang Secondary school lies 48 kilometers south of Katesh in Tanzania. To reach it we drive East on the unpaved main road for 9 kms and then South on a dirt road that remains in pretty good shape as it passes through arable land for about 20 kms. The last section is a rough track and the school is another km off this; branches and bushes are pushed aside by our vehicle until we enter the school compound. Although visitors seldom find this school, we are amused to find a sign saying "Car Park" and a turnaround area that would challenge a London taxi.

The school has no electricity, no water on site and even cell phones fail to work here. Somehow, 130 students - some residential but most of them walking to school from their modest homes nearby - and their teachers exist here. Classrooms are stark and textbooks rare - although our 9 CHES girls at the school are the exception as sponsor funds provide each student with eight texts.

Catriona and I visited the school in November. Thanks to an undertaking we had received before we left home from **Glanford Middle School** in Victoria, we asked the headmaster what the school most needed.

"Lighting", was his reply. "Students cannot study after nightfall and the teachers can't work. Teachers are leaving. We now have only two".

This news was reported to Glanford in December and a cheque given to us just before we left for Tanzania in mid January. We visited the school as soon as we arrived to confirm arrangements and within three weeks, the necessary solar equipment had been purchased, the tradesmen shipped in and two solar panels installed; one on the roof of the classroom block and the other on the teacherage.

We visited the school again in March and were met with smiles of delight and gratitude by both students and teachers. The small teacherage has 4 bright bulbs for the now 8 teachers while three classrooms are lit every night with two bulbs in each. Classrooms are filled every school night by students returning to the school from their homes. The students applauded when we entered the classroom after the headmaster acknowledged Catriona as "the source of the light"! She was quick to point out that the true source of the light were the students who raised the money.

The \$1,400 required to provide this life-changing service was raised in a variety of ways by the empathetic and industrious students and staff at Glanford. They will be amazed and deservedly proud when they see the pictures documenting their contribution to the students and teachers of this remote school.

As we were heading for the "car park" on our last visit, we asked the headmaster what would be



next on his list of priorities if Glanford were to have another fund raiser for them.

"Water" was his immediate reply. "We need gutters and a series of storage tanks to collect water when it rains".

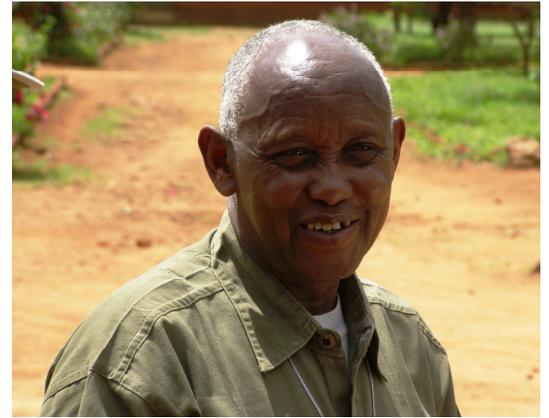
The message will be passed. Stay tuned.

Chris and Catriona Harker

PIUS MASHA - TANZANIA'S CHES CHAIRMAN

On March 2, 1939, Pope Pius XII took office in Rome. Two months later in distant Tanzania, a Barbaig boy was born into a large Catholic family. In honour of the new Pope, the new child was named Pius, pronounced not PIE-US as in Europe, but PEE-US.

By the age of five Pius had already undertaken the duties expected of a boy; daily he took the family herd of cows and goats out of the family compound and watched them as they foraged for food on the almost barren pasturelands of the Hanang District.



One day, when he was 13, several officials visited the family compound. A conversation then took place between his parents and the local District Education Officer. Pius was of school age but had never attended school. His parents argued that one didn't need to know how to handle cattle. The DEO responded that in the 1950s, it was possible to have a career that involved something other than cows. The parents were doubtful. The DEO then played his trump card: the law stated that children must attend school. A hasty farewell ensued and then Pius, with tears streaming down his cheeks, was marched away to attend something called "school" about which he knew very little.

When he arrived, he was taken to an officious looking person who asked him his name. Pius, a shy child, hung his head and mumbled "Pius Mwashu". This was said so softly that the official said "Pius Masha"? And Pius, not wishing to correct such an august person agreed with this pronunciation. He was registered as "Masha" and has been formally known by this technically incorrect name ever since.

Although he spoke only Barbaig when he arrived at school, he soon learned Swahili. He also discovered that he loved to learn and soon was one of the top students in his class. Time passed. Pius learned English, graduated from school, was given a teacher training course and assigned to teach in Hanang. He was an excellent teacher with a delightful sense of humour and an ability to relate positively to his students without having to yell or threaten with a cane. His abilities were noted and he became a Head Teacher (Principal) in a series of schools until his retirement in the late 1990s.

Not every moment of his life was consumed with his profession. He met Aurelia, fell in love, married her and helped her produce 8 children, all of whom now are employed as professionals or tradesmen.

When the Tanzanian branch of CHES was started in the early '90s, members of the community were needed to run the CHES programme. Pius, though still working as a busy principal, volunteered his services and assumed the responsible position of Secretary-Treasurer. In 2005 he accepted the chairman's job and has held it ever since, ably assisted by the equally hard working Naomi Saulo as Treasurer and Bernadette Basili as Office Administrator.

If there had ever been a written job description of the Tanzanian CHES Chairman, it would never have included the words "building contractor". Yet much of Pius's time since he became chairman has been just this. First the Harker's raised the funds to build a large Learning Centre-Dormitory and dining hall-kitchen on the grounds of Nangwa Technical School. Almost as soon as this project was completed, Sara Williams rode into town (from Saskatchewan) and as a result of her visit to Katesh, raised the funds for a now virtually completed 80 room hostel, dining/study hall, kitchen, matron's quarters, work experience centre and accommodation for visitors. Pius kept an eagle eye on all purchases and every phase of the construction for both projects. This, in addition to his regular duties as CHES Chairman, a task that now oversees the education of over 270 CHES students. Although his expenses are covered, Pius receives no salary for the countless hours he donates to CHES.

CHES could not succeed overseas without the incredible efforts and dedication of our volunteers in Tanzania and Kenya. There are many, but of these, Pius Masha is pre-eminent.

LOOKING AHEAD

CHES supporters living in Greater Victoria might be interested to know that a CHES DINNER is being planned for NOVEMBER. The date, location and cost are not yet fixed but organizers anticipate that this fund raiser will include a Power Point presentation illustrating recent CHES initiatives and a Silent Auction.

For further information after June 1, contact Chris or Catriona Harker at 250 656 9229 or chriscat@pacificcoast.net

The Reimer's Impressions of Kakamega - 2011

Upon returning to Kakamega as agents after a five year absence to live at CHES House on the Lurambi- Shikoti Road, we can't help noticing changes in areas such as transportation and the town itself. However, the bureaucratic infrastructure of the area and the need for CHES help for girls to attend secondary school remains the same.

Since the post-election clashes in 2008 between tribes, government, and political parties, the highways have not been maintained, and, in some cases, have been deliberately damaged. On the road from Kisumu to Kakamega there isn't much blacktop left, just giant potholes which trucks, buses,

and cars slalom around. In 2006 we did not see a single motorcycle. Today, piki pikis are found in town and all over the rural areas, taking much of the business of bicycle taxis and matatu mini buses. Whole families will crowd onto one uninsured 100 cc vehicle, driven by a helmetless, probably unlicensed, driver.

In "downtown" Kakamega, the open air market was temporarily relocated in 2010 and now extends along much of the roadway through the town. The traffic congestion is intense, with matatus stopping everywhere and dukas crowded close to the roadway. There is no place for pedestrians.

The newest phenomenon is the expansion of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) to 10,000 students from just a few in 2006. These students have to live, buy food, and let off steam somewhere, just like university students worldwide. Several of those places are on Shikoti Road where CHES House is located. The nearby Salvage Hotel caters to them with televised football and cricket game and cheers ring out regularly. The music (coined "techno thump" by agents after hearing many hours of it) reverberates through the neighbourhood. As the campus has grown, the need for decent student housing has not kept up. The alternatives are more like slums. There are plans to expand the campus into various areas outside of town which might help spread things out a little.

There is another musical delight in the CHES neighbourhood, a result again of the 2008 clashes. People fled to safety, abandoning their pets to fend for themselves. As a result there are many stray dogs in the area, as well as dogs like the CHES watchdog, Akwonyi, inside walled compounds. At some prearranged signal, about 8:00 p.m., we hear the canine choir from the neighbourhood's invisible dog population. One or two dogs will bark a couple of times to each other and within seconds all the dogs in the area are howling in some sort of order. It goes on for about a minute and ends abruptly, on cue. It can be quite chilling. This happens regularly until about 4 a.m. when the roosters and cows take over, followed by the birds.



Emmanuel Muchisu, in Form 3 at Mukumu Girls' High School. She is sponsored by Denman Islanders Annie and Hamish Kimmins.



Form 4 girls finishing with a Mean Grade of "A" at CHES celebration March 2011.

There are several supermarkets now, making shopping much easier. Nakumatt is located in a real mall that includes washrooms (10 bob), Kula Korner (smoothies, samosas, sodas, pizza), book store, 2 ATMs, shoe store, and Alinda Ware's new Kakamega Craft Shop. Before we arrived we had heard there was a Nakumatt in Kakamega and we wondered who would be shopping in it as there are only a handful of muzungus in the area at any one time, and most of them are like us, retired Canadian teachers or NGO volunteers. Apparently there are also a number of fairly well off Kenyans in Kakamega who buy pretty much what we do.

However, there is a huge divide between these wealthy Kenyans and the rest of the population.

There doesn't seem to be a middle class in the Kakamega area. Bargaining in the outdoor market for enough food to feed the family is still what concerns most local people.

Everyone seems to have access to someone's cell phone, including our students. Land lines are used less and less and are even more unreliable than in 2006. "Mpesa" is replacing Kenyans' use of banks. You can transfer and spend money through your cell phone and not have to deal with the banks' difficult procedures. It is still difficult for the average Kenyan to open a bank account, and the many charges are high.

Today inflation is alarming. The government is giving a 12.5% cost-of-living increase to its employees to help them buy food, since food takes up the largest part of their wages. People who have no job, are worse off than ever, which is the greater percentage of people in Western Province where CHES operates. We're seeing that our students are finding it harder than ever to find shillings each term for fare to CHES House and for their personal shopping. CHES is still doing a necessary, valuable job in keeping needy girls in school and educating young women.

Of course, some things haven't changed, although we wish they would. Bureaucracy still moves slowly, especially on Fridays. The power still goes out at the end of the day, just when you are eager to cook dinner. The city water often flows only in the middle of the night, not when you are awake to hear it begin. The toilets don't work without water! Mosquitoes are still sneaky and wait for an opportunity to slip under your net as you sleep. Dengue fever has now reached Kenya, but there is no vaccination for it. TB and malaria treatments are free now, once you have been able to see a doctor and be diagnosed. The incidence of HIV/AIDS has steadied and even decreased. There is less stigma and people go to testing and treatment centres voluntarily.

The girls we speak with every day consider their sponsor their lifeline, proof that someone cares what happens to them. They wait hopefully for us to tell them their sponsor has sent them a letter in reply to theirs from last term. We estimate that only 10-15% of the girls have ever received a letter. When a girl does receive one, which we have the opportunity to deliver, the letter is clutched to the girl's chest and there are smiles and tears. The girls tell us they save every correspondence sent to them by sponsors and that they get them out of their school boxes and re-read them often.

The girls' interest in their sponsors is genuine. Although we talk to the students about where their sponsor lives or what Canadian life is like, they would rather get a letter! That part has not changed -- so please take time to write a letter to your girl as it is a treasure for her.



Former CHES girls, sisters Lordan & Esther, show the "school girls" hair style, compared with the "3 years away at university" creation involving extensions!