We would like to thank the many CHES supporters who took the time to complete the survey in December. An analysis of the results will be an on-going process but because we noted a number of comments that appeared to misunderstand CHES funding practices, we thought some clarification might be in order.

- No Board member receives a salary. They attend Board meetings and do work for CHES at their own expense; this includes three who come from Vancouver Island. As we meet over the dinner hour, we pay for our own snacks. Any who travel to Kenya or Tanzania do so at their own expense and cover their own expenses while there.
- Agents pay their own way. Although there is no rent to pay while they are at either CHES House, they contribute to the monthly running costs while there.
- The Surrey Teachers’ Association generously provides us with a small office free of charge.
- The Kenyan and Tanzanian Boards receive no salary though travel and meal expenses are covered.
- We employ an office administrator and night watchmen in both Kenya and Tanzania. In Canada we employ a part time secretary who works two days a week.
- In Tanzania the salaries of the hostel and store/secretarial service employees are covered by the income generated by these services.
- In Tanzania, our office is rent free as we own the property and the building. Thanks to the “One Swing at a Time” last June, we are working to achieve this objective in Kenya.
- The annual audit is expensive but we are charged less than 50% of the going rate.
- Services (phone, internet), insurance, office equipment, and supplies are expenses we cannot circumvent.

If there are questions concerning expenses or CHES finances, please contact our office. You may also check CHES’ T3010 filing with the Canadian Revenue Agency for complete financial information at the following link: http://bit.ly/1HmNa4V

CHES adheres to the ethical principles of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Please check out these principles at the following link: http://www.afpnet.org/Ethics/EnforcementDetail.cfm?ItemNumber=32610
Forget Me Not . . .

Having been a long-term donor with CHES, I am delighted to receive letters from my sponsored Kenyan and Tanzanian students. Always, my students expressed the hope to receive a letter from me, telling about my life. I found it very hard to compose a letter after hearing about their lives in Africa.

Being a CHES agent in Kenya recently I had the opportunity to meet many present and former CHES students. They told me how much they looked forward to receiving mail from their sponsors. They are all very inquisitive about Canada and our lives. Finally realizing how important sponsor letters were to them, in future, I will send a photograph of myself, as well as some of the scenery where I live. I will include postcards representative of Canada and some Canadian flag stickers (available at dollar stores). My letters or notecards will tell of the activities I am involved in (hiking, biking, canoeing, etc.); the types of food I enjoy, and the hobbies I have. I will share knowledge about my family members and even tell of the weather. The students know very little about life in Canada and they love to hear the details. I now realize that receiving mail for these students is like Christmas morning!

Send your letters in Kenya to the school address provided when you are assigned your student. In Tanzania, send your letters to the CHES office in Katesh. If you can't find the address, contact us at the Canadian office: 778-565-5261 or by email at canadianharambee@shaw.ca

by Linda Louise, CHES agent in Kenya

Rainy Day People

When Catriona and I visited Katesh in February 2014 the short rains were still in progress. We noticed the hostel girls setting off to walk an hour to school each morning with only their school sweater for protection. If it rained en route, and in Katesh the rains can be torrential, they arrived at school soaked to the skin and had to suffer the day in wet clothing and risk another soaking on the long walk back to the hostel.

We talked this over with our local CHES committee and learned that although ponchos were not available locally, good quality raincoats were. There was however, no budget to purchase them.

I mentioned this dilemma to my son, Robb, who lives in Korea where he runs a successful business with numerous international clients. He undertook to raise the $2000 US required and affected this through social media; something called Facebook.

His appeal appeared in late October and by mid December he had reached his goal. Special thanks must be awarded to Morgan Wilbur in Singapore who contributed $500. We were then able to contact our team in Katesh who ordered the coats from Dar es Salaam and had them shipped to the hostel. They came neatly packed in a separate bag about the size of a place mat.

Catriona and I hosted a special family safari this year and so, fortuitously, Robb arrived with us into Katesh in mid January. The next evening, just before dinner, our family walked over to the dining hall where the CHES girls living at the hostel were waiting. As we walked in carrying an enormous sack of raincoats, we were met with 10 minutes of welcoming songs. Robb was then introduced, made a short speech, and presented the raincoats. We gave one to every student who thanked him with a round of applause and yet another song. We then left but learned later that we had gone only a few steps before the bags were opened and the modeling began. The girls were delighted, knowing that rainy season walks were no longer going to result in cold soggy days in the classroom. They were amused too as the coats are full length and some of the girls have a lot of growing ahead of them. When the smaller Form I girls arrive, some hemming might be required.

These coats will be given to the students to use but will be returned at the end of the rainy season. They remain the property of CHES so that they can be issued to future generations of CHES girls.

Once again, the initiative and drive of a single person can be seen to make a huge difference. Our hostel girls say “Asante Robb”.

by Chris Harker
The Alumni Conference

What exciting times! As current CHES agents, Linda Louise and I were privileged to be included in the alumni conference held on December 27, 2014. Rebecca Odhiambo (Kenyan CHES office manager), Sarah Anyika, Edith Olwande, and several other former CHES students located more than 219 women, of these 121 were able to commute to Kakamega to attend the meeting.

The air was abuzz with excitement and energy as these vibrant, colourful women filed into the room. Each woman introduced herself and explained her station in life. We heard from many university students as well as mothers, clinicians, accountants, teachers, nurses, dental technicians, lab assistants, office managers, bankers, journalists, registration clerks, public housing managers, radio presenters, doctors, and civil engineers. This litany of accomplishments was astounding.

The most prominent sentiment expressed by all these young women was their gratitude for the sponsorship they received from CHES and the pride they have in being continuing members of the CHES family. For them, this is a great honour. Many expressed the wish to meet their sponsors to thank them and to gift them in return. It was suggested that a letter of gratitude explaining where they had come from in life and where they are now would make an excellent gift.

Rebecca was an inspiration for all! Her dynamism carried the day as she praised these young women on their accomplishments and extolled them to continue achieving success in all their endeavours. She organized and facilitated the election of the chairperson, Mwanaidi Abdi Minboga, and perhaps best of all, got the group singing songs as a way to renew their feelings of kinship and solidarity.

The group shared ideas, set the association goals, developed strategies to maintain contact in this large country, discussed how to move forward, and how to achieve the desired outcomes.

What do the CHES alumni see as the following as important goals:

- begin small and grow big
- give back to their communities and families by volunteering in schools, clinics, hospitals or wherever help is needed
- develop community projects
- visit schools to share their stories and specialties
- share CHES ideals with communities and colleagues
- mentor current CHES students
- continue networking to reach former CHES grads in all locales
- develop an active social network to maintain contact, share ideas and help each other establish an “old girls” network
- share ideas, job opportunities, motivational and inspirational thoughts through social media
- sponsor a CHES student when financially able
- liaise with the Kakamega county office to establish small business loans without interest for women entrepreneurs.

The lunch break was full of laughter, hugs, smiles, and gratitude. We heard numerous stories of lives gone from hardship and lack of hope to success and lots of hope. The women still seeking employment in a country with high unemployment left the meeting with hope and inspiration for a gainful future through the networking that was set in place.

To date Sarah Anyika has set up:
- Face book page (chesalumni-kenya) managed by Edith Olwande
- What’s Up page (chesgirlskenya) managed by Linsy Vugutsa
- email (ches.alumni.kenya@gmail.com) managed by Sarah Anyika

To view conference photos or give a little “you go girls” encouragement check the listed sites or their web page.

What a day! We left exhausted but inspired by the enthusiasm of these bright young women. These women will surely change the face of Kenyan poverty.

Namaste.

by Helen Morrish, CHES agent in Kenya

As a result of suggestions found in the recent survey, we understand that some of our supporters (both sponsors and donors) would welcome the opportunity to remit monthly supplementary donations automatically and without having to think about it every month. These donations would be in addition to sponsorship monies that we do need to have by the end of December as school fees must be paid to the schools by CHES in January.

If you would like to follow up on this suggestion, please leave a message on our office phone (778-565-5261) or send us an email canadianharambee@shaw.ca

Like many small NGOs, we struggle to make ends meet so, no matter how small the amount, we can find a use for it.
Needed Projects Made Possible Through Special Individuals

In 2012 Sandee Rothwell contacted Catriona and me. She had safaried with us several years before and asked if she could do so again, this time with her family.

We arranged and escorted Sandee and her entire family (21 individuals) on a safari in early 2013. Sandee, the matriarch, was 77; her youngest grandchild was 5. It was both wonderful and memorable for all concerned.

While on safari, it is inevitable that, on occasion, we mention CHES as we sit around the campfire or bounce over the savannah in our vehicles. On one of the final nights, Sandee said she’d like to make a significant donation to CHES Tanzania but wanted the funds to go to something that was needed but that we wouldn’t be able to finance without special help.

A period of consultation with our Tanzanian Board ensued and I was duly asked to suggest that providing improved water supply and storage facilities at the Sara Williams Hostel would be hugely appreciated. Up to 100 girls board there on a regular basis and during the two annual tutorial periods there are over 300 girls in residence. The half-inch water line that frequently is waterless and the two mini-reservoirs are more than often unable to provide water for such basic needs as cooking and washing let alone laundry and toilets.

Sandee enthusiastically endorsed the idea and handed me a cheque for $10,000.

Flash forward to early 2015.

- There is now a new supportive water line to the hostel that emanates from a recently discovered seemingly limitless aquifer.
- We have gutters that collect rainwater from three lengthy roofs during the heavy rains and direct it into our new tank.
- One third of the new tank is underground. It holds 50,000 liters and can be filled with a couple of heavy rains. During the dry season, it can be filled from the water lines during the periods when the water is turned on. If water consumption levels equaled that of Canada, the tank would hold enough water to supply the dorm girls for only a couple of days. Tanzanian demands are more modest. A full tank should provide their needs for about 50 days.

The hostel is unlikely to be short of water in the future. The resident girls have never met Sandee but are very grateful for the gift she has given the CHES girls, present and future, who stay there. One referred to her recently as “Mama Maji” (Mother Water).

by Chris Harker

Last June, Ginny Golding played 65 holes for her 65th birthday and raised $83,000 for CHES. A small portion of this money went to provide English Immersion workshops in Tanzania and life skills workshops and school supplies for Kenyan students. The remainder of these targetted funds has enabled CHES to purchase a plot of land in Kakamega. In the coming year, after building plans have been drawn up, we hope to proceed with the actual building of our own office and agent quarters in Kenya. As we currently lease a house/office there, the ultimate savings of $10,000 yearly in rent will go directly to support girls’ education rather than for administration expenses in Kenya.

by Carol Gilchrist

Last year, 2014, Robb and Jeanette Taylor, long time CHES supporters from Lumsden, SK, escorted a safari to Tanzania that included bringing their guests to Katesh to visit the CHES programme there. Among the group were Jan and Dwight Dracek from Calgary. After they all got home, the Taylors received an email from Dwight to say that he and his wife had been most impressed with the CHES operation and would consider covering the expense of a required capital project there.

As it happened, our Tanzanian board had recently been informed by local authorities that our hostel for 100 girls on the main road through town was required to have a wall around it. Their initial reaction was to
point out that a wall around the two hectare plot would cost about $20,000 and, as the budget for construction was non-existent, it would have to wait.

Serendipity is a marvellous thing. The Draceks have undertaken to cover the cost of the wall, the building of which is currently underway. We are impressed and grateful for this very generous contribution to the safety and welfare of our girls.

Thank you Jan and Dwight.
by Chris Harker

Before Sue Harbinger died in 2013, she donated $20,000 to CHES for the purpose of helping our Tanzanian girls improve their math scores. During the 2nd week in February, 12 keen, professional, secondary school mathematics teachers gathered at the CHES compound in Katesh to participate in a seminar aimed at discussing strategies and activities that might be incorporated in the teaching of Form I mathematics at schools attended by our CHES girls. This was the 2nd year such a seminar was held and was an answer to a request for more discussions after last year’s successful seminar and the subsequent Math Immersion sessions held for CHES students last June/July.

Students entering Form I in Tanzania come from primary schools where mathematics has been taught in Kiswahili. The secondary school mathematics course and textbooks are in English – a language that may be the student’s fourth language! The vocabulary of mathematics is sometimes complicated enough, but to cope with it in a new language adds unbelievable difficulties for Form I students.

By the end of the week, the walls of the dining hall in Katesh were covered with paper number lines, coordinate axes, charts, and other items created by the participants. In some of their classrooms, chalkboards are so worn that diagrams are impossible to read from the back of the class. A cardboard or paper number line that is taped to the wall means it doesn’t have to be redrawn for every discussion. Having students create such things reinforces the math concept as well.

Thanks to CHES Canada and CHES Hanang these seminars happened; a special note of appreciation goes to Robb Taylor for willingly conducting the seminars. The spin-offs can only help our CHES girls and the whole education program in Tanzania. The English Immersion sessions have had amazing success and we look for similar results as our CHES students gain confidence and facility in mathematics.

report summarized by Joy Ruffeski

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Notice to Sponsors - CHES AGM

All CHES supporters are invited to join us for our 30th Anniversary celebration. This special event will be held in conjunction with our annual general meeting on Saturday, September 19, 2015, from 2 – 4 pm at the Centennial Community Centre in New Westminster. Refreshments will be served as we review successes of the 30 past years CHES has been in operation, present new initiatives, and elect the Board of Directors.
Our Experiences as Agents in Kenya

W e were greeted at Kisumu airport by Kenyan Board member Brenda Mbaisi and at CHES house by Rebecca, Alinda, and Roslyne. They familiarized us with the facilities and with their years of experience in Kakamega, they answered our many questions about day-to-day survival.

The living quarters were fine although we replaced old aluminum pots and pitted teflon frying pans with new stainless steel ones, some odds and ends of utensils, and an electric kettle that we were happy to pay for. Getting used to the mosquito net was a challenge but we realized the need for it.

We love Kenya and the people of Kenya. It is so much easier to know people in a foreign country when the same language is used. Everyone has been very friendly and helpful. What a beautiful group of people. At first, the young children gave us frightened looks but with a wave and a quick hello they returned huge smiles. Now we resemble the Pied Piper with local kids calling greetings out to us or walking behind us wanting a "high 5"!

Our transportation method is generally on foot as we like to walk each day. If groceries are too heavy we will jump on a motorbike for a ride home from the market. Taxis we use for longer distances or in the dark. Riding on the back of a bicycle does not hold any appeal as we see how close other vehicles come to clipping them as they pass. Our thoughts on buying bikes of our own here (we love to bike) quickly died as we watched the hazardous traffic on the roads.

Each evening we are serenaded with a different symphony. We are not sure which dog in the neighbourhood is the conductor but he/she demands the most from the participants. They outdo even coyotes in the length and intensity of the cacophony. Luckily we brought earplugs from Canada.

Rebecca held 4 days of orientation for us on office procedures, personnel issues, and so forth. As Rebecca has not had agents to help her in quite some time she had completed most of the replacement interviews on her own but we were able to be involved in several interviews for the replacement scholarships. This helped tremendously to see the flow of things in the application process through to the reports from the verifiers.

For the first month we were kept busy as we:
- gathered sponsor letters and mailed them to CHES Canada
- compiled estimates of 2015 fees and forwarded to CHES Canada
- discussed salary and contract with Joel on behalf of the askaris and forwarded the info to CHES Canada
- interacted with Everlyne (CHES grad/board member) responsible for purchasing Form 1 supplies re: budget, delivery, and storage
- helped to notify successful candidates for replacement scholarships
- sent letters to schools notifying them of students who were no longer funded by CHES due to low scores or pregnancy
- accepted textbook returns from disqualified students
- set up files for successful replacement students
- managed petty cash and receipts then entered in data base
- paid electrical, water, and internet bills
- began organization for Form 1 applications/interviews beginning Jan. 5, 2015
- attended a fundraising at the home of a CHES grad (1996) who is finishing her last semester in furthering her university degrees. She has done this in conjunction with a fulltime job in the Ministry of Housing in addition to raising her daughter and two young orphaned nieces
- attended a CHES Kenya Board Meeting and met some of the board members
- attended the Alumni meeting on Dec. 27 and shared greetings from CHES Canada with the 121 people present, provided many photographs of the event to the organizers, and completed an article on this event for the CHES Spring 2015 newsletter
- wrote letters of recommendation for Edith Olwande, a CHES grad, who has helped us during Rebecca’s
absence by answering our many questions, handling phone calls to parents, processing returned textbooks, setting up library cards for Form 1 students, compiling books for Form 1 students, and travelling to villages to verify the neediness of candidates for repositioning scholarships

• wrote a letter of recommendation for Sarah Anyika, a CHES grad who was instrumental in organizing the Alumni meeting.

We hit the ground running for sure but loved to be busy. However, our most precious gift has been meeting some of the CHES grads that have shared their stories with us. They continue to feel so grateful to CHES for the chance that was provided for them. They all want to give back to the sponsors. We tell them that their success in life has been the best gift possible. We were overwhelmed with emotion being greeted by the 121 CHES grads at the Alumni meeting. What a beautiful sight to behold such brilliant young women who will be the leaders in Kenya and the role models for others coming up!

by Linda Louise and Helen Morrish – currently CHES agents in Kenya

The Selection Process

The two essential criteria one needs to apply for a CHES scholarship in the Hanang District of Tanzania is that one must be female and have passed the government set Standard (grade) 7 exams sufficiently well to have been awarded a place in secondary school. The third criteria is need; nearly all our girls come from dysfunctional families and/or homes with one parent or less.

In late November, the applications begin to arrive. This year more than 300 were received. As the number of Form I girls we can accept is directly related to the number of sponsors we can attract, the intake numbers vary from year to year. This year the magic number was 60.

To narrow the field the Tanzanian team looks at Standard 7 marks and then confers extensively with school, church, and village officials from the applicant's home area. By mid January, the list had been pared to 90 girls. These girls were then called in on a Saturday to sit a CHES-set exam. A few fairly simple questions in a variety of subject areas are asked in order to confirm that the applicant is truly up to the standard required to deal with the demands of secondary school where the 10 academic subjects are taught in English.

To have been successful in primary school is in itself remarkable as many schools are in poor condition, texts are in short supply as are teachers, and a class of 50 would be considered small; we visited one recently with 128 kids crammed into a single room. To emerge from 7 years of this with even a rudimentary understanding of and ability to speak English and cope with basic math skills suggests a level of competence and self-discipline that in Canada would be considered remarkable.

Communication is a problem in rural Tanzania. Only 74 of the 90 girls showed up for the exam. Although some may have decided to abandon the idea of secondary school (or more likely and regrettably, been told to by parents who felt they would be more useful at home), there is no doubt that some failed to get the message. Hence a “second sitting day” was arranged.

At this point the selection is fairly straightforward. The top 60 girls were offered a scholarship. Although high marks are not an absolute, we have learned from experience that accepting a student who struggles in most subjects invariably leads to the student falling further and further behind and generally having to leave by the end of Form II. The girl has now pegged herself as a failure and CHES must contact sponsors to tell them of the dropout and provide them with another, generally a successful Form III student who is in need.

A painful adjunct to this process is the number of girls, those who were in the 90 to 300+ cohort, who appear with a parent anxious to write an exam and gain entrance. Turning them away is heartbreaking for us and for them. As Pius Masha, CHES chairman in Tanzania, once said, referring to the selection period, “We all cry a lot?”.

by Chris Harker

Happy faces of the new Form I students as they are homeward bound with supplies and their parents after a long orientation day
Thank You to Sponsors and Donors

CHES would like to thank all of the sponsors who have sent in $600 to pay for their student for the 2015 school year. If you are unable to continue sponsoring your student in 2015, please let us know so we can find another sponsor.

We would also like to thank everyone who sent in extra donations for the CHES program. If you have questions about tax receipts or payments for sponsor fees or donations please contact the CHES office. Note that any donations made through Canada Helps have a 3.9% fee deducted by Canada Helps for its administration.

Did you know that CHES has six program areas and with the exception of student scholarships, money must be raised from other sources than through sponsor donations for their student scholarship? The program areas are:

1. Student scholarships
2. Student supplies and textbooks
3. Teacher and student workshops, tutorials, and seminars
4. Education related capital projects designed to enhance student learning and to offset future local expenses
5. Program management and administration in Kenya and Tanzania
6. Organization (CHES) management and administration in Canada

6TH ANNUAL HARAMBEE CHARITY GOLF CLASSIC

New Venue! - building on the success of One Swing at a Time event held on June 23, 2014, this year's Harambee Charity Golf Classic will be held at the University Golf Club in Vancouver.

New Format! - 8 a.m. shotgun. The course will be set up as 12 par threes and 6 par fours to attract all levels of player. Scramble format.

Fabulous Value! - $175 per person includes green fee, power cart, and lunch. All players are required to take a power cart in the interest of pace and the layout of the course for this event. Non-golfers are invited to join us for lunch, speaker, and Silent Auction. See www.harambeegolf.ca for further information and registration.

Our website www.canadianharambee.ca is in the process of being redesigned and updated. Check it out periodically as we will be regularly changing the website and including information about the various schools CHES girls attend in Kenya and Tanzania. You may even see a photo of the girl who you sponsor doing an out of school activity or at one of the workshops! A special thank you to Carolyn Clarke from England who looked after our website for many years and is now “retiring”. Our board director, Caitlin Davis, will be our new webmaster.