The Official Opening of our Kenyan Home

Although CHES had been in their new home in Kakamega for several months, the official opening wasn’t held until May 28 when Executive Director Joy Ruffeski visited from Canada. The rain that started in the early afternoon didn’t dampen the spirit of anticipation of the invited guests: Kenyan board members, office manager, askaris, the house cleaner, the contractor, and the builder. Finally it was time for the festivities to begin and suddenly the skies cleared.

Everyone gathered outside and burst into song as they travelled the walkway up to the entrance. The ribbon was cut and the doors flung open. Singing and dancing started again as all proceeded into the office area where they finally settled into chairs as short speeches were made by officials attending. All attendees expressed joy at finally owning our own home in Kenya and were most thankful for the work of CHES in helping so many individuals over the past 32 years. They were assured that this wonderful legacy will continue.

A celebratory meal was followed by the cutting of a cake to finish off the evening.

The money that will be saved by no longer paying rent will be put into scholarships for many more girls. What a wonderful legacy for Ginny Golding’s One Swing at a Time effort that started this project several years ago.

by Joy Ruffeski
Gordon Brown Describes How The New Kenyan CHES House Came To Be

The story of the building of the new CHES House is really a story of the many facets of CHES; all coming together to fulfill a dream.

My CV is as long as it is boring and has absolutely nothing to do with construction in Kakamega. After retirement I spent a number of years, working, off and on, in the education sector in Africa. During that time I heard many horror stories of construction in Africa; under bidding and leaving projects incomplete unless more money was paid, skimming materials and reselling them were only two common threads in an industry that appeared unregulated both at the contracting and tradesman level.

I had direct experience with the building of two schools; one a village school in Zambia and one a multimillion dollar school in Tanzania. The Zambian school was a dream of the village. A meeting was held and people of the local municipality, the local training college (which I represented), the Education department, and the village elders all attended. Promises were made and all promises were broken. The villagers decided to build their own school which they did from local wood. The fruits of their labor ended up as a pile of termite dung within months. With the help of myself, another financial donor, and the villagers who made by hand, two cement blocks a day, a three-room elementary school with office was built and furnished. In Tanzania a multimillion dollar school was build with dining facilities, boarding facilities, library, high tech office, computer labs, science labs, and classrooms. It was built under USA supervision. It opened with 2 x 4s and spikes sticking up in the air, ditches across pathways, paint cans rolling off roofs, and student desks with sharp nails sticking through the back supports. The 10000 sq. ft. library floor was replaced three times.

Every CHES agent who had been to Kakamega during the conception or planning of the new CHES House recommended that a board member be on site during the building process. With great trepidation I became that person.

But the story really begins with two donors, one a golfer who decided to spend her 65th birthday raising money for CHES. The other, who on retirement donated a significant amount of money to CHES. Together they made the dream of a CHES House of our own a real possibility.

Rebecca Odhiambo, our Kenyan office manager, went way beyond her pay grade, choosing a plot and organizing the purchase of the property, which was to be the site of the new CHES House. The Canadian board spent much time considering design ideas that would fit the budget and the plot size.

Armed with a pretty much agreed on building concept, some recommendations from the Canadian board, and a host of concerns I made three trips to Kenya.

The first trip was really to learn about the local construction industry, the regulations, building procedures, the kind of builders available, and costs. I interviewed: builders recommended by the CHES Canada board, County officials, builders recommended by local contacts, and contractors recommended by CHES Kenya Board members. Of all those interviewed, it was a recommendation from one of our long time employees Beatrice Adda and another from one of the CHES Kenya board members Everlyne Musalai we went with.

Mr. Mukolwe turned out to be extremely knowledgeable and had had a reputation for integrity. After four lengthy interviews, he offered much in the way of considerable insight into regulations, best practices in the construction industry in Kenya, and a businesslike way of tendering and supervising the project. For all this he never asked a shilling. He was selected to do a working design and be the contractor for the whole project. An interesting sidelight is he, himself, had been a sponsored student when young.

The second trip was to oversee the construction of Phase 1: the building of a perimeter wall - an essential step in securing the materials for future construction. During that time a building committee was formed consisting of a CHES Kenya board member Brenda Mbaisi, the office manager Rebecca, the contractor, and myself. The contractor had a reasonable bidding process. Bidders were vetted to ensure a record of completion and financial viability and unit estimates of material were made available to gauge the reasonableness of the competing bids.
The contract was let to a company operating locally and the winning builder completed the wall on time and on budget.

Trip three was to complete the building of the CHES office and the accommodation for CHES agents. Because of the efficiency with which the first phase was completed, the same contractor and the same builder were used. Material estimates were the same as used for Phase 1. During the building of Phase 2 the contractor visited the site daily, I visited about twice weekly, the building committee visited regularly, and the full Kenyan board had the opportunity to visit the site as it neared completion. Things progressed smoothly in spite of the fact the builder had to be away from the site on two occasions for extended periods of time: one for the funeral of his father in India and one for a medical procedure in India.

I left just before Christmas 2016 with just the finishing touches needing to be done. Thanks to the persistence of the two agents there, Alex Mullins and Jeff Yu, some deficiencies were spotted and the money withheld until the deficiencies were corrected to the satisfaction of the agents and the building committee. In spite of their youth - a handicap in African culture and a difference in cultural values - our agents held firm and with Brenda’s conciliation skills the problems were finally resolved to the satisfaction of both sides.

Our very own CHES Kenya house opened in the spring of 2017.

Phase 3, which was to act as safe house for girls in need and extra accommodation on the occasions an extra agent is in Kakamega, could not be finished with the money available although plans and estimates were in place. CHEBAK girls, such as Edeth, who had done emergency work in the office and saw girls in need given a safe place to stay, made a compelling case for the completion of Phase 3. With the support of the Canadian Chair Joy Ruffeski; the fund raising ability of Canadian board members Carol Gilchrist and Chris and Catriona Harker; and the generosity of Sandy Rothwell who donated more than 50% of the cost of our Safe House, Phase 3 was completed in October 2017.

The new CHES House has a number of benefits to the CHES program. In spite of the loss of outdoor space and the lovely garden, the financial benefits of moving from an aging building to a new one and from a rented building to one we own will provide sustainable lasting benefits to CHES. An increase in scholarships and additional funds for desired programs will result.

The chairs and members of both CHES Canada and Kenya, many agents, Kenyan employees, members of the Kenyan building industry, CHEBAK girls, and of course the two major donors whose contribution initiated he whole project all contributed to the realization of the new CHES House.

by Gordon Brown

We can’t do everything . . . but we can do something!
2017 AGM

CHES held its AGM at the Centennial Community Centre in New Westminster on Saturday, August 27. The Board of Directors gave reports of various activities for the past year and presented a financial report.

A PowerPoint presentation showed the new office and agent quarters in Kenya, which was officially opened on May 28 when executive director Joy Ruffeski was in attendance. The photos took us back over the past 25 years from the rented duplex to the newly constructed building, as well as the start of construction of a second small building, a safe house for visiting girls and extra agents. I was impressed by the dedication of those who saw the building through to completion and those who donated and raised money for the land and building.

Alexandra Mullins and Jeff Yu gave a presentation on their time as agents in Kenya from December to February. They helped select new Form 1 girls, visited schools and met alumni, who have formed their own organization, CHEBAK, to mentor current CHES girls and help in other ways.

The following CHES directors were re-elected for the coming year:

- Nadia Anderson
- Orrie Babiuk
- Beverly Ford
- Catriona Harker
- Chris Harker
- Karen Kilbride
- Nancy Mann
- Sara Okunyanyi
- Louise Paulsen
- Joy Ruffeski
- Lorrie Williams

Four members retired from the Board of Directors: Gordon Brown, Caitlin Davis, Carol Gilchrist, and Mandy Klepic. CHES thanked them for their many contributions while serving on the board. Two new board members were elected: Alexandra Mullins and Jeff Yu. Welcome to Alex and Jeff, who bring their experience as agents and their contact with CHEBAK.

The 28 in attendance mingled and met one another as we viewed displays and photos and ate the excellent goodies provided by board members.

by Anne Norman

CHES Sponsors Make a Difference

A big thank you to our CHES sponsors. Without you many young women would not be able attend secondary school and have the opportunity for a better life. Many of you have been sponsoring for over 25 years and continue to do so. Now more than ever we are looking for more sponsors as some are unable to keep up with their support. The relationship between the sponsor and student is very rewarding, especially when you see their progress over the 4 years. The Alumni Association in Kenya (CHEBAK) is gathering information about CHES grads and we know that many of the girls have gone on to post-secondary education and are working. They are giving back by mentoring the current students and helping to supply girls with personal items.

Don't let your sponsorship be a secret, spread the word. Let your friends know that you sponsor and invite them to look at our website. Our saying that “We can’t do everything . . . but we can do something” is very true and with your help to bring in more sponsors we will be able to help more young women achieve their goals.

Just a reminder the $600 fee for your student for the 2018 school year is due in December 2017. You should have received a note asking for your donation for 2018. If you have already sent in your fee, thank you very much. Your fees may be paid by cheque, a bank transfer of funds from your bank account into the CHES bank account, or by credit card through www.CanadaHelps.org If you wish to post-date the cheque to January 2018 or send monthly post-dated cheques for 2018 that is fine. Extra donations for the student support fund or operating expenses are greatly appreciated and will also be tax receipted. If you have any questions about fee payment, tax receipts, or if you are unable to continue sponsoring your student, please contact Louise Paulsen (treasurer) or Julia Kambeitz (secretary) at the CHES Office: Tel: 778-565-5261 or email: canadianharambee@shaw.ca

American sponsors may send their donation to: Humanist Society, 1821 Jefferson Place NW, Washington, DC 20036 and they will issue you a US tax receipt.

CHES and our students would like to thank you all for your generous donations.

by Louise Paulsen

We can’t do everything . . . but we can do something!
Burnaby DKG Chapter and Our “Harambee Girl”

In my 28 years as a member of the Burnaby Chapter of DKG, we have always had the Canadian Harambee Education Society (CHES) as our project. In that time, we have donated money to support one and often two girls in their four-year education in Africa. Each year, when we pay our dues, we add an additional $20 to support our “Harambee Girl”. So, over the years, that has become a $500 to $600 donation each year. Each year, we receive statements of our girl’s marks and letters from her. In return, we write back as the girls love to hear about our organization and life here in Canada.

A highlight of this relationship was a visit two summers ago by one of our members, Diane Smith, to the family of Lorrie Mwamire Okunyanyi. Her mother was one of the original students supported by CHES. Many years later, her daughter, Lorrie, was named after our current Provincial President of DKG, Lorrie Williams, one of the founding members of CHES. Diane reported that her visit to Kakamega, a small town in western Kenya, was exciting. In an informal discussion, Diane told us that the people were gracious, kind, and there was always food to be shared.

Our current student, Esther Marungu Lutomia, a Form 1 student at Bishop Sulumeti Girls High School in Kakamega, Kenya, is a bright and involved young woman. She earns top marks in all of her subjects and participates in many activities at the school. This year we have continued to give the total amount of money needed to cover the next two years of her education of our now 2nd year “Harambee Girl”.

by Phyllis Stich

The Role of the Kenyan Board

This past year the Kenyan Board has increased their role and become much more involved in ensuring the success of CHES students in Kenya. Specifically they:

• Assist in the selection verification process during both replacement and Form 1 intake.
• Conduct school visits. Each board member has been assigned a school and they mentor, guide, and counsel CHES students in the assigned school.
• Provide general welfare by standing with CHES students who have lost their parents.
• Volunteer topics and facilitate workshops voluntarily during workshops.
• Help the Canadian board find good new schools for CHES students to attend.
• Support the day-to-day activities of the office manager to arrive at decisions that are challenging. Specifically, they have helped with submitting returns to the Kenyan NGO Council as well as the Canadian office.
• Identify Patrons who work with CHES students in schools.
• Helped the CHES beneficiaries come together to form an alumni association.
• Organized the Form 4 leavers party and celebration.

by Anthony Napoli

We can’t do everything . . . but we can do something!
Director Chris Harker has been a long time customer of the Peninsula U-Brew Winery in Sidney; so it was natural for him to ask owners Maureen Bifford and Stan Roberts if they would like to offer a gift certificate as a door prize at a fund raising function almost a decade ago. They did so generously and continued to do so at future such events.

Three years ago Maureen asked Chris for more details and, learning that a girl could be sponsored for $600, suggested that this might be easily raised at their annual Customer Appreciation Day each June. Thus began a tradition.

On the final Saturday in June, Peninsula U-Brew Winery throws a gala luncheon for its customers. Sausages and hamburgers are grilled on the barbeque, enormous salads appear, there’s live music, free wine and beer, and tent awnings provide shade from summer sun or rain.

For the last three years, Chris and Catriona have attended, bringing with them a CHES poster, numerous brochures and of course, a willingness to mention CHES to anyone who might be interested. Coinciding with this, Maureen and Stan, along with their loyal and friendly staff, have devised a number of low-key fund raising activities.

Tickets can be purchased for a draw that offers a variety of attractive door prizes; a 50-50 draw is on hand as is a challenging “Guess the Number of Corks” game. Maureen sells 52 playing cards and then draws one to provide the lucky winner with $50 off the next batch of wine. Other customers simply pop a bill into a donation jar.

It is a day that is enjoyed by one and all and one that benefits CHES and most of all, Jeniva Dahko, a young Tanzania girl whose future is now assuredly rosier thanks to the generosity and goodwill from all those who attend each year. She is now in Form III and near the top of her class.

As customers become more familiar with CHES and its mandate, they seem to become more generous. The first year U-Brew Winery tried this, just over $600 was raised. The following year it was about $750. This past June, the total exceeded $900.

CHES is grateful to small business owners such as Stan and Maureen and hopes that others might follow their lead as the quest for additional sponsors is an on-going one.

by Chris Harker

CHES Website Updates

The CHES website is being updated on a regular basis. In addition to information on the work of CHES and the success stories of our girls, we like to keep you informed, between newsletters, of upcoming events and report on some of the past events. Look for recent photos of students, schools, and happenings. You may even see a photo of your student engaged in some activity. Be sure to check www.canadianharambee.ca out!

Also on the website is a list of items you can purchase - note cards, books, jewellery. Contact the office at 778-565-5261 for any of these things. All monies raised goes towards student support.
A Special Celebration

On a warm sunny Saturday afternoon in June, when we finished teaching the English Immersion sessions to replacement students and those in Forms 3 and 4 who needed more assistance with their English understanding and writing, we attended the wedding of a CHES girl who is now a teacher. Gwaheli has taught primary school and lived for several years in the village of Nangwa.

Because of our teaching obligations we only attended the gathering after the church service – a good thing as the church service, all conducted in Swahili, was 4 hours long. The reception was held under a few tents in the field of the groom's brother's yard. We arrived as the affair was well underway and, as we were considered special guests, were seated near the front beside the bride's family.

The bride was one of the first Barbaig girls to attend school through CHES. Many of those seated near us still live in their village compounds (bomas) and were wearing traditional dress - animal skins, lots of beading, necklaces, and bracelets along their forearms and biceps. Barbaig tribe members have the elongated ear lobes with very large holes in them. As I had never been inside their actual bomas or seen their traditional dress, it was fascinating to see! The flies seemed to be choosing between the family due to the way the animal skins are cured and the nearby animals!

In family clusters, guests carried their gifts up a central aisle in rhythm to music being played, each group handing their offering to the bride and groom and their attendants. Most gifts were pieces of fabric carried above people's heads like a canopy. Gwaheli will be the best-dressed woman in the village for at least 10 years with the amount of cloth she received. Also received were some pieces of corrugated metal for roofing (a guy gift as everything else was definitely for the bride), spoons, a piece of furniture, and so on.

Needless to say Naomi (CHES treasurer), Joy (Executive Director), and I were a small group. We were accompanied by a little girl of about three who had latched herself onto me. Where else does greying longish straight hair and fair skin attract such attention? One lad who sat near me kept stroking the skin on my arm to see if the usual dark colour of the African people might appear. We got quite the cheer as we danced up the aisle with our hot water thermos jug! It was a unique gift but a most useful one as both the bride and groom had established homes and really didn't need things for cooking or eating. We did not stay for the wedding dinner as there were a lot of people and we were quite exhausted after a week of teaching.

It was a most memorable event and so much more fun as it was very different that our very formal Canadian weddings. For me, it was definitely a highlight seeing what a difference having an education made for a CHES girl.

by Sue Elliott
Leaving a Legacy Gift to CHES

A legacy gift is a lasting statement of your generosity and care for what is important to you. It is an opportunity to know that what you cared about during your life will be supported even after your lifetime. To create your legacy, when preparing your will, discuss this topic with your lawyer and think about CHES and what your support has meant to so many young African girls.

You can leave a specific dollar amount, a percentage of your assets, or securities to CHES so that qualified, young African girls, whose families cannot afford their secondary education, can attend High School and have a better life.

All the leading Canadian banks have documents and can give advice about Charitable Giving and Charitable Gift Programs that can be customized to donors’ individual financial situations. Many are designed to make it easy for you to support charitable causes important to you while potentially receiving significant tax advantages.

CHES, with its Canadian Charitable Registration #BN 131-48-8017-RR0001, qualifies for Legacy giving.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email canadianharambee@shaw.ca or call the CHES Office at (778) 565-5261.

by Orrie Babiuk

CHEBAK – Our Diamonds in Kenya

CHEBAK (CHES Beneficiaries Alumni of Kenya) is the alumni group of CHES in Kenya. They are a very active group of young women who are giving back to CHES and their community. Having received a “hand up” through their CHES sponsorship in secondary school, they know the importance of helping others and are setting an outstanding example in their communities. As a Kenyan community-based organization (CBO) they are required to give back to the community and as such have instigated and/or involved in several projects this year. Specifically, they

• organized the Form 4 leaving party
• provided necessary supplies for Form 1 girls. CHEBAK gave each newly selected CHES girl a “gift bag” containing sanitary pads, soap, toothpaste, tissue paper, petroleum jelly, and other necessity. These items were donated by CHEBAK members as they understand what it was like to be from a very needy family.
• provided support for families of deceased CHES girls. This spring two girls passed away – one a current student and one who graduated in 2008. CHEBAK raised funds to help with the burial and support the families provided a Mentorship program at 4 schools (Imbale, Musoli, Emalindi, Shikunga) used by CHES as well as several needy day secondary schools in the Kakamega area
• started and operate the Pads for Girls Initiative which provides sanitary supplies to girls whose parents cannot afford to do so. (CHES provides these supplies to our girls so our girls are well taken care of in this respect). Research shows that most girls in Kenya miss 4 days monthly due to lack of the necessary supplies.
• established a welfare kitty to help those CHEBAK members in emergencies and also for providing emotional support
• sponsor a girl in secondary school through CHES

If you are interested in more details on their ongoing work, check out their Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/CHEBAK

from information provided by Sarah Martha Anyika
Annual Appeal Fundraising

Asante Sana (Thank you). We would like to profoundly thank everyone who contributed to our June e-mail Fundraising Appeal. Our email blast fundraiser was sent out on June 1, 2017, and the total amount of money raised to date is $15,670.

These donations are instrumental in helping our Tanzanian and Kenyan girls to have a well rounded education which not only gives them, their family members, and their future children the chance of a fulfilled life but even more dramatically saves them from a shorter life span and a life of subsistence and poverty.

Our email Annual Appeal did not go to our sponsors because sponsors already give so generously for school fees and many of you also add extra money to your annual donations. These contributions are already the heart and soul of our organization. The Appeal went to previous and hopefully future CHES supporters and we are delighted with the amount of money raised. Thanks to the Appeal, we had enough funds to complete the Safe House and provided most of the funds for text books, malaria nets, academic tutorials, and English and Math immersion support, girls personal supplies, life skills workshops, and many other necessities for our girls for their next academic year. Once we make up our budgets for next year we are also hoping to have funds to increase the number of girls we are sponsoring as our numbers of girls are dropping.

Appeal Statistics:
• 667 email requests were sent out to previous CHES supporters and others who were associated with CHES Board members.
• 338 (or 51%) of the recipients opened the email.
• 37 (or 5%) of the recipients donated - 12 by cheque and 25 by Canada Helps. Canada Helps fees came to a total of $105.49.
• Of the 37 donors, special thanks go to the 3 people who donated a total of $11,400 and two more who donated $1000 at $500 each.
• No one unsubscribed.

We welcome your feedback and advice to plan for next year’s Appeal because we hope our supporters will continue to help to maximize even more girls’ successes. All emails sent to canadianharambee@shaw.ca with “Annual Appeal” in the subject line will be forwarded to the Fundraising Committee members.

CHES Girls who have just graduated from Form 4 saying thank you for your commitment to giving them a bright future.

by Catriona Harker
Fundraiser in Saskatoon

Tuesday, October 24, 2017, the Sutherland Bar in Saskatoon was invaded by Sara Williams and her committee who organized a Steak Night aimed at raising funds for the installation of gutters (eaves troughs) and tanks at the Sara Williams Hostel and CHES house in Katesh, Tanzania. This installation will provide water security for roughly 100 CHES girls.

Over 190 people dined on great food and watched slide shows featuring CHES people in Katesh. Musical entertainment was provided by “After Four”. The M.C., Jackie Bantle, kept things going with jokes and door prize draws. A message from Naomi Saulo, the Tanzanian Secretary Treasurer was read to the group.

A silent auction raised an astounding amount. Donated books drew many voluntary donations.

Sara Williams showed a PowerPoint and described the work of CHES in Katesh, the Tanzanian people involved, and the growth of the CHES program there. A short slide show described the “water harvesting” plans for the dorms, dining hall, and CHES House.

Over $7000 was raised for this project. Donations are still coming in.

A huge thank you to the organizers and to the wonderful people who attended and made incredible donations to CHES.

by Robb Taylor

The Christmas Gift That Will Change a Life

Sponsoring a girl’s secondary education is an incredible gift that will change her life. Education will give her a world full of opportunities. Sadly, in recent years the number of girls CHES sponsors has decreased. We would love to provide more scholarships, but to do this, we need more sponsors.

Have you thought of sponsoring a girl as a Christmas gift to perhaps several members of your family/organization/workmates? We began this practice with our “outer family” several years ago and have not only received positive feedback but also note that several recipients are now doing the same thing themselves. Giving the gift of a scholarship is so much more meaningful than giving something to someone that they may not want or can’t use.

If a $600 “present” sounds like too much to spend, then perhaps consider sharing the cost with other people. If such friends or colleagues do not come to mind, contact the CHES office and we will do our best to pair or triple you up with others like you who wish to give the gift of education to a girl in Kenya or Tanzania.

The recipients of such novel gifting will be touched to realize that your act of generosity, to sponsor a young girl, will change her life forever.

Think of it as a two for one present!

by Chris and Catriona Harker

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