It is with great sadness that we pass on the news that Louise Paulsen died on May 6. Since the early days of CHES, Louise has been a Director, taking on the onerous task of Treasurer and Student/Sponsor Coordinator. In late April, Louise had brain surgery for a cancerous tumor. For a short period, she appeared on the road to recovery but, sadly, this didn’t last.

CHES survives and succeeds thanks to the generosity of our donors and to the volunteers who contribute so much time and effort to our NGO. First and foremost of these was Louise. Although there are many tasks that need to be done, the most important and time consuming are “the books” and the matching of student and sponsor. For many years now, Louise, with the help of Julia and other directors, has worked tirelessly on this task.

At CHES we pass on our love and special condolences to the family she left behind. As you will see in an article on the final page of this newsletter, there is some comfort to all of us that she was recently celebrated on the occasion of her 80th Birthday. Louise’s legacy is in the thousands of Kenyan and Tanzanian girls who have been touched by and benefitted from her hard work, love, and dedication. She will be sorely missed.
Linda and Larry Huber from Regina, Saskatchewan served as CHES agents in Kakamega Kenya from October 30, 2017, to February 28, 2018. It was a rewarding experience for two important reasons; we became part of CHES in Africa, an organization that has the noble vision to help young African girls become educated and we had the opportunity to live in a very different culture and environment.

We found the experience worthwhile on both counts and expect we will not be quite the same in the future because of it. The vision and mandate of CHES encapsulated in the motto “We can’t do everything . . . but we can do something!” spoke to us from the beginning of our involvement and came to life during our stay. The cultural aspect centred around the Kenyan people. We were treated with acceptance and respect from the first day. Our colleagues at CHES were kind, supportive, helpful, and generously invited us into their lives. The people we encountered in Kenyan society were welcoming, kind, and helpful.

One of the most important functions we performed as CHES agents was to participate in the selection of scholarship recipients. The criteria for receiving a scholarship was well known in the Kakamega educational community. Students had to have been high achievers during their primary schooling and they had to be from “needy” backgrounds. We recognized quickly that our Kenyan colleagues were committed to these criteria because they were aware from personal and first hand experience the difference CHES scholarships made in the lives of young Kenyan girls. They had experienced hundreds of examples of girls coming from unfavourable circumstances who were able to take advantage of the opportunities provided by CHES. They kept this purpose at the forefront of what they did on a daily basis.

It was striking for us as we participated in the interviews to hear that almost all of the girls lived on small “shambas” of an acre or less, in one or two room mud huts with mud walls and floors and tin roofs. Electricity was seldom available and water had to be carried, often from near-by rivers. The girls shared sleeping accommodations and many had to walk long distances to attend their primary schools. Many lived in compounds containing houses of extended family, including grandparents, uncles, and aunts.

As an example from the more extreme end of the continuum, although all of the applicants demonstrated need: Mary (not her real name) - father alive, 59 years old, has 5 wives and 19 children; father lives in all 5 houses, none of the children have completed secondary school, father sells bricks made out of sand, mud, and cement and makes and sells home brew. Mary’s mother is a casual labourer, digs for neighbours and when there is no work helps make home brew. One of the comments from the Kenyan interview desk, “This girl seriously needs help”. She presented well during her agent interview, was precocious and happy. Mary received a scholarship and we met her later when we visited her school - she was happy and doing well in her studies. The interviews referenced above took place in December. We interviewed approximately 250 girls and were able to award 78 scholarships, the highest number ever.

We can’t do everything . . . but we can do something!
The next aspect of our stay that was very interesting and rewarding as well, took place during January when we visited the schools that have CHES girls to meet with the Principals, CHES Patrons, and visit with the girls. At each school we presented a cheque to the Principal for the CHES school fees. We met with the CHES girls as a group and each agent along with CHES’ Kenyan Office Manager had the opportunity to convey a congratulatory message to the girls. It was very rewarding and interesting to meet all of the CHES girls at their own schools as we travelled around Kakamega in a 100-kilometre radius. We also got to see more of this beautiful country and get a feel for the rural areas.

In between those events we took the opportunity to do some travelling. In December near Christmas, we visited the Rondo Retreat in the Kakamega Rain Forest. In early January we travelled to Diani Beach, south of Mombassa and stayed at a resort on the Indian Ocean. We also travelled to Egypt in early February flying from Nairobi to Entebbe at 2 a.m. and on to Cairo. We had wonderful travels in Cairo, Giza, Alexandria, and a Nile Cruise from Aswan to Luxor. We concluded our time in Africa with a two-week safari in Tanzania which included the CHES office and hostel in Katesh. The safari was organized by Robb and Jeanette Taylor, long time CHES volunteers and supporters.

We returned to Canada on March 14 after almost 5 months in Africa. When we decided to serve CHES in Kakamega, Kenya, many of our friends and family members had concerns. We did too. We did have experiences out of our comfort zone but adapted to our new environment, did our best, and are happy that we were able to contribute in our small way to the amazing CHES story.

We close by mentioning that all CHES girls are required to write letters, on a regular basis to their Canadian sponsors. This task is done by the girls with great care and pride as they are immensely thankful for the support they receive and wish to give a positive impression to their benefactors. The other side of the coin is the joy they feel when they receive letters from Canada. Contact with sponsors enables them to establish a personal relationship which they value highly.

Finally we close with thanks to the CHES board for the leadership and the immense amount of work they do and have done on a volunteer basis for many years that has enabled this wonderful enterprise to flourish and make a difference to the lives of Kenyan and Tanzanian girls.

by Linda and Larry Huber
Tanzanian President Abolishes Secondary School Fees

Many sponsors may have seen this headline in a newspaper or in a news feed at some point over the last year or so and be wondering why our CHES sponsorship for Tanzanian students is still $600 a year.

So that everyone is in the picture, this is what happened: Two years after his election in 2015, President John Magafuli of Tanzania, passed a law prohibiting government Secondary Schools from charging school fees. However when the 2017 school year started, schools were not given nearly enough money to operate, even at a below subsistence level. At that point in time, all over the country, the local councils had to pay for the running of the schools in their jurisdictions. In order to do that, they had to charge parents when they sent their children to school. So now we no longer pay school fees but we have to pay the local councils and that money goes to operate the schools.

Our girls attend as many as 30 different schools in the Hanang District in Tanzania and the different councils have different fee structures. Part of sponsors’ $600 goes towards paying these fees. Our girls come from subsistence families. None of our girls have two healthy working-parents, many have one or no parents, or parents too ill to work. Some have struggling mothers who have been abandoned by their fathers and don’t have relatives who can help with school fees. Many are looked after by aunts or grandmothers or older siblings. Consequently, the rest of the $600 is used to buy text books, school supplies, school uniforms, girls’ personal hygiene items, mosquito nets, transportation for the girls, school lunches, emergent medical needs and, for many, boarding fees. We also provide extra academic support and life skills workshops in the school holidays. This impressive list is partially covered by the portion of the $600 not used for fees and is augmented by our regular fundraising activities and by some sponsors who add extra dollars when paying their $600.

Thank you to all our sponsors. Because of you, our girls’ lives are transformed by their education and there are so many successes to be proud of.

by Catriona Harker

Improvements to the Sara Williams Hostel

Two important improvements are being added to the Sara Williams Hostel in Katesh this Spring. Thanks to the funds raised by Sara and her team in Saskatoon last year, a 60,000 liter water tank was nearing completion in mid March. Gutters will then be installed along the entire roofing network of the girl’s dorm, designed so that they will all lead to a single drainpipe into the new tank. Additional water will flow from the new gutters on the adjacent dining hall. This reservoir, together with the other large tank elsewhere on the property plus the five additional smaller tanks, should overcome the water shortage difficulties that have plagued our girls during each dry season.

Another issue we have overcome is the ongoing problem of power outages. Almost daily the power cuts out without notice. When this occurs during the dinner hour, the study period, and when it is time for 80 girls to go to bed, or to get dressed in the dark (as they rise at 5:30am), it is more than just a nuisance.

With thanks again to the funding already noted, CHES has installed solar panels to provide lighting in the girl’s dorms, latrines, kitchen, dining/study hall, and outside each building. From now on, activities need not be disrupted - for one thing Tanzania has an abundance of is bright, overhead sunlight. An additional benefit from going solar will be to reduce the monthly electricity bill.

Our dorm girls are grateful and appreciative. However, the real payoff comes at exam time. To our delight this year, the highest marks achieved by girls throughout the Hanang District in the recent Form IV exams were earned by our CHES girls.

by Chris Harker
KENYAN PRESIDENT ANNOUNCES “FREE” SECONDARY SCHOOL

As one of his 2017 election promises, President Kenyatta announced that, if elected, his party would abolish school fees for secondary school. He followed through on this promise, a day after schools reopened for 2018, by releasing nearly $280 million to all public secondary schools.

However, this does not mean now that going to a Kenyan secondary school is free and that CHES no longer needs to help girls!

The Kenyan High Commissioner, at the CHES dinner held on March 8, confirmed that only the tuition is free but there are a myriad of other expenses that still must be paid by individuals who attend secondary school.

As our Kenyan girls all attend boarding school, we continue to be required to pay their fees for uniforms, texts, boarding, food, and mandatory school tutorials. Parents or in the case of our sponsored girls – CHES – must also pay the bill for teachers’ salaries, utilities, school boards, salaries of non-teaching staff (askaris, cooks, groundsmen), lab supplies, assessment tests, upkeep and/or purchase of school buses, insurance, building of new classrooms, medical supplies, school photocopying, and so forth.

In addition, the girls are not allowed to even enter the school grounds at term start without the approved mattress and bedding as well as all their school supplies including those for personal hygiene. Parents/relatives of CHES girls cannot afford these basics so the money sponsors donate for their girl goes to pay these requirements.

So is secondary school in Kenya really free? Unfortunately only on paper but not in the real world. However, thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and donors, at least it is for CHES students.

by Joy Ruffeski

TOMATOES FOR TANZANIA!

Dear Gardening Friends in Saskatchewan,
Willie is once more growing his famous tomatoes. There are about 30 varieties this year! There are also sweet and hot (and VERY hot) peppers.

Proceeds from the tomato sale will be used to purchase additional solar panels for the CHES girls’ hostel. The Katesh hostel accommodates up to 100 girls from remote villages while they attend one of the three government schools in the town of Katesh.

The sale will be held at Sara Williams’ home in Grasswood on Saturday, May 19, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Directions to Sara’s are as follows:
• Drive south on Clarence, past Stonebridge and past the Willows
• Eleanor Street is the 3rd street on your left once you’re past the Willows (If you get to a four-way stop, you’ve gone one street too far south)
• Turn left on Eleanor Street
• Sara’s is the first house on the left with a big deer fence around it and lots of trees (the gate will be open, park on the street or in the yard)

Please keep to the 60 kph on Clarence or your tomatoes could be a lot more expensive (it’s patrolled).

If this time and date does not work for you, please call 306-373-6345 to arrange an alternate time.

Please feel free to pass on this information to all of your tomato-loving family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, and post-pers.

by Sara Williams
We can’t do everything . . . but we can do something!
CHES CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

The Canadian Harambee Education Society was very fortunate to celebrate International Women’s Day (IWD) with a very special Kenyan guest, High Commissioner John Lanyasunya and his Secretary Isaiah Koech, on March 8th, 2018, in New Westminster. While the weather outside was atrocious, the spirits were high inside St. Barnabas’ hall. Lorrie Williams hosted the dinner event with the help of other CHES Board members and supporters. Special local guests included Chief Rhonda Laraby of New Westminster and former Kenyan CHES students in Canada, Lorrie Rowena Mukirazi and Lorrie Mwamire Okunyani. The hall was full and the food, supplied by Greens and Beans Deli and Russell Pohl, was plentiful and excellent. The silent auction was a big hit and most people went home with an art object from Kenya or Tanzania.

The High Commissioner spoke about the importance of education for girls in Kenya. He is very supportive of the work that CHES is doing in Kenya and he is aware of the positive impact higher education for girls will have for the girl’s families and their communities. Lorrie Mukirazi and Lorrie Okunyani also spoke about their families and their lives in Kenya. Both girls were sponsored by CHES to attend Secondary School and they thanked the CHES sponsors and urged them to continue sponsoring other girls in Kenya and Tanzania.

by Karen Kilbride

OUR BELOVED SPONSORS

My sincere appreciation goes to all the sponsors in Canada who have been donating money to sponsor girls in Kenya, for sure your money was well put to use and the feedback is being felt by many.

My other sincere appreciation goes to all the individuals who also spared their time and came to volunteer at the CHES office in Kakamega as agents, especially during the crucial time of student selection. You did, and you have always done, a wonderful job. You did select the best students to be recipients of the CHES scholarships - both former and current students are just wonderful girls.

by Rebecca Odhiambo, CHES Kenya Office Manager
Ron and Norma Evans and Jaqueline Bantle from Saskatchewan have every right to be proud of the young lady they have sponsored for the last two years for she has just graduated from teacher’s college with a Diploma in Early Childhood Education and is looking forward to beginning her career as a teacher. Between teacher’s college and her first posting “somewhere in Tanzania”, she is in charge of running the CHES store located on the Sara Williams Hostel compound in Katesh.

Agricola is well named as she was born 22 years ago into a farming family near the community of Gitting, about 20 kilometers from Katesh. Her parents have a small plot there on which they grow beans and corn each year. Their 12 cows provide the family with milk and the fields with fertilizer. Agricola and her five brothers and sisters worked on the farm from an early age. They still do, as failure to produce an annual crop can lead to dire consequences in a subsistence society.

Nearby Gocho Primary was Agricola’s first school. Later, with a CHES scholarship, she attended Gitting Secondary. She acquired her new sponsors when she moved on to Mandaka Teacher’s College, located on the flanks of Mt. Kilimanjaro. She has studied there for the last three years and looks forward to the vital job of working with Tanzania’s youngest learners.

Agricola likes to climb. Three times she has ascended to the top of Mt. Hanang, Tanzania’s fourth highest peak; the first time she did this she was still in primary school. More recently, with a group of classmates, she climbed to Mandara hut, well on the way to the summit of Africa’s highest peak, Mt. Kilimanjaro.

A lifetime of experiences lie before her but when asked what the best thing that’s happened to her so far has been, her immediate reply was, “The day I learned I had a CHES scholarship”.

There are many others besides her sponsors who are delighted with Agricola and proud of her success – her mum and dad of course and everyone involved with CHES.

A MOVEMENT THAT CAN’T GO UNNOTICED

CHEBAK is a fast-growing young women’s group, led by Sarah Anyika who is a 4th year student at the Technical University of Mombasa. Sarah, a CHES graduate from Mukumu Secondary School in 2011, was sponsored by Erika Looije and currently is holding together more than 400 former CHES grads and other well-wishers who have an interest in supporting girl’s education.

CHEBAK is being well received by the schools and communities who are now appreciating CHES for having supported these girls who have turned to be a blessing to them. In other words, they feel CHES has touched their lives indirectly through these beneficiaries of CHES scholarship.

The girls conduct their meetings and fundraise through their WhatsApp group and M-pesa on their phones and organize among themselves who will take part in what event.

Other former CHES students who also are strongly supporting CHEBAK are:

- Joanne Lyanda - CHES grad 2002 at Butere Girls Secondary, sponsored by the Cook family, and now a lecturer at Masinde Muliro University
- Cynthia Shivachi - CHES grad 2010 at Shikunga Secondary School, sponsored by Violet Lawton. She joined Egerton University and studied medicine and is now a medical doctor at Jeramogi Oginga Odinga Referral Hospital in Kisumu.
CHEBAK girls have come together and are doing a great job in the Western communities of Kenya depending on their passion and professions. There is a group led by Zainab that is holding medical camps and jigger eradication. This group comprises members of CHEBAK in the medical area. The 2nd group led by Joanne is doing mentorship in schools and this group is mostly comprised of CHEBAK members who are teachers. The 3rd group led by Sarah is known by the name “pads for girls” and is distributing free sanitary pads to girls in rural high schools.

CHEBAK is truly giving back to the community in many ways. The entire group is also sponsoring a girl, Mary Aloo Tabu, who has just started Form 1.

by Rebecca Odhiambo, CHES Kenya Office Manager

MAGRETH EMMANUEL

Magreth was born in 2000 near the small village of Mogitu. She grew up sharing her simple dwelling with her five brothers and three sisters.

Her parents were Iraqi and therefore traditional farmers. Each child, almost as soon as he or she could walk, was expected to help on the shamba as productivity meant food; meant survival. The soil was poor and the rains infrequent but somehow the parents did well enough to send all their kids to school - and to keep them there as all of them showed promise in the classroom. Today the oldest daughter is married and teaching English while the oldest son is about to graduate from university with a science degree. Another sister is studying pharmacy.

In 2012 tragedy struck; Magreth’s father was killed by a vehicle as he walked beside the road. The family’s resources were severely impacted. Magreth, a promising student, wondered if she would be able to attend secondary school. Having learned of CHES, she applied, was selected and for the last four years, has attended Daniel Noud Secondary School near her home. Here she thrived, becoming a class leader and excelling in all her subjects. In November, she wrote her Form 4 exams. When the results were published in February we learned that she was one of only three students out of the 80 CHES girls that wrote to achieve a “Division 1”, the highest rank. Magreth is therefore guaranteed a place in Form 5 somewhere in Tanzania. Her classes will begin in July. She hopes to focus on the sciences as her goal is to become a doctor. She has never ceased to declare how much she appreciates the support she’s received from CHES and, in particular, her sponsors. “Without them”, she states, “I would have no chance to fulfill my dream to become a doctor and to help my people together with my family”.

Her sponsors, Carolyn McAskie and Sylvia Spring from Wakefield, near Ottawa, have written letters of support throughout Magreth’s secondary school and are delighted to learn of her academic success thus far. They look forward to continuing their support for the next two years and, in due course, to learn to what university Magreth will be assigned to continue her studies and achieve her goal.
R R SMITH MEMORIAL FUND FOUNDATION

A special thank you to the R.R. Smith Memorial Foundation of the BC Retired Teachers’ Association for their grant of $1,500 for student support. This money will be used to purchase much needed school supplies, text books, and mosquito nets for CHES girls in Kenya and Tanzania. In addition to this grant, the R R Smith Memorial Fund is also sponsoring a student in Kenya for the next 4 years.

A SPECIAL BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Louise Paulsen, a long time CHES Board member and Treasurer celebrated her 80th birthday on March 31. Her daughter, Lisa, hosted a wonderful party for family and friends to help Louise celebrate the big day. The theme was tropical, complete with a Mexican food truck to prepare Louise’s favourite dishes. Louise’s brother Richard and his family travelled from Alberta to join the party. Louise was very happy to also connect with former colleagues and agents and she thoroughly enjoyed the festivities!

by Karen Kilbride

DO YOU LOVE TO TRAVEL AND LEARN ABOUT OTHER CULTURES?

On page 2 and 3 of this newsletter you read about the Huber’s experience as CHES agents in Kakamega. You, too, could have this life-changing experience! You will have a lot of fun and adventure while making a real difference in the lives of very poor but bright young Kenyan women.

We have a new, clean, secure home of our own now in Kakamega where you would live and it is only a 10 minute walk to the nearest “shopping centre” where you can buy anything you would find in your home town. In quieter times you could visit world-famous game parks, attractions, and beaches in Kenya, Tanzania, and other nearby African countries.

The length of commitment is usually 3 to 6 months, but volunteers are welcome for shorter periods also. Your only expense is your airfare (tax receipt available) and your living expenses in Kakamega. If you are interested in finding out more about becoming an agent, please contact the CHES office.

Phone: 1-778-565-5261 or email us at canadianharambee@shaw.ca

SAVE THE DATE! CHES ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Date: Saturday, September 8, 2018
Time: Refreshments & Social - 1:30 p.m.; AGM - 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Place: River Room, Centennial Community Centre, 65 E. 6th Ave., New Westminster

A bus stop is close to the entrance. Two free parking lots available: one parking lot entrance off 6th Ave. and the other parking lot entrance off Cumberland St.