

Canadian Harambee Education Society

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

Fall 2018 Newsletter #66



We learned to our delight that Naomi Saulo, our mainstay volunteer treasurer in Tanzania finally acquired a visa to visit Canada, bought her ticket, and came to visit us all in September 2018.

It was not easy for this to happen. For the last several years, many CHES Board members who visited Katesh have expressed a wish for Naomi to visit Canada. To our delight she told us last year that the time was right and she could afford to come.

However, Canada does not make it easy and denies travel visas for approximately 80% of sub-Saharan applicants. This occurred when she applied last year. When she again applied in April this year, there was no response until mid-August when we had all given up hope. Then suddenly, her visa was issued.

Naomi arrived in Vancouver on September 4, attended the CHES AGM on September 8, and then spent a number of days in each of Victoria, Kamloops, Lumsden, and Saskatoon before heading home on September 30. Throughout her stay all food, accommodation and travel costs were covered by Canadian hosts all of whom have enjoyed Naomi's friendship and hospitality when in Tanzania.

Check out our website www.canadianharambee.ca for stories of her experiences in each of the areas she visited.



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Canadian Harambee Education Society - 2018 AGM

The CHES AGM was held Sat., Sept. 8th, 2018, at 2 p.m. in the New Westminster Centennial Community Centre. The meeting was well attended.



Lorrie Williams opened the meeting and welcomed those attending. Sadly missing from this year's meeting was Louise Paulsen, our most dedicated board member/treasurer for many years. Her passing this spring has been felt by many. She is and will be missed by many CHES sponsors, donors, and the Board.

Lorrie introduced our special guest from Africa, Naomi Saulo, CHES Treasurer in Tanzania.

The Executive Reports were printed for those to read and ask any questions.

Our 2018-2019 Board of Directors elected was: Nadia Anderson, Orrie Babiuk, Beverly Ford, Catriona Harker, Chris Harker, Karen Kilbride, Nancy Mann, Rowena Mukirazi, Joy Ruffeski, Ross Thomas, and Lorrie Williams.

An interesting, informative PowerPoint by Catriona Harker showed the work and success of CHES in Kenya and Tanzania.

A social hour followed the meeting giving those in attendance an opportunity to mix and mingle.

Changes to the CHES Board of Directors

At the most recent AGM, Ross Thomas was elected to the CHES board of directors. Ross and his family have sponsored students in Kenya for the past 8 years, and he and his wife were able to visit CHES's office in Kakamega, Kenya, in 2014 to meet their first student when she graduated.

Ross has joined the board in order to help with the CHES website and online presence. And since he already knows where Kakamega is, we are hopeful that he'll return there as an agent one day!

At the AGM, several directors did not stand for re-election due to other commitments: Alexandra Mullins and Jeff Yu, former agents in Kenya; and Sarah Okunyanyi, a CHES graduate now studying at UNBC in Prince George. CHES would like to thank them for their support and assistance and hopefully they will be able to return to the board in the future.



The board of the Canadian Harambee Education Society is made up entirely of volunteers and has only one part-time staff member in the Surrey office. Consequently our administration costs are low and the maximum amount possible of every donation goes to support the girls in Kenya and Tanzania.

We would welcome with open arms anybody interested in joining the board, volunteering in the office or at special events, or traveling to Africa as a CHES agent.



Experiences as an Agent for CHES in Kenya

As an Australian I first got involved with CHES in November 2016 when I was in the Slocan Valley standing on the side of the road with my thumb out, trying to get back to my house in Nelson, BC. Two lovely ladies, Helen and Linda, picked me up and we got onto the conversation of travelling and Africa. For years I had dreamed about visiting and doing volunteer work there, so they told me of their experience as CHES agents in Kenya.

I contacted the CHES office and in March 2017, I went to Vancouver for an “interview”. April I was kicked out of Canada after 4 1/2 years because my working holiday visa had expired and I hadn’t found a lovely Canadian guy to marry me. On October 26, 2017, which happened to be the re-election day for the Kenyan President, I flew into Nairobi feeling very nervous!

There is so much I would like to write about so you understand all that goes on at CHES Kenya, but instead I’ll share a couple of things I found while I was there.

When we (I came the same time as the other two agents, Larry and Linda Huber) first arrived we were straight into it, with Form 1 – 3 students coming in to hand their end of year marks. If it looked like their grades were dropping we talked to them about improving. I remember thinking about a couple of the girls, “How did they get this scholarship” when their grades were not what I thought a sponsor would like to see.



Weeks passed and we were involved with the selection process, I realized it wasn’t as easy as that to get good grades. The girls come from all sorts of backgrounds; from farms to towns; broken families to supportive parents. Some are an only child while one had 26 siblings. How they performed in Primary School may not transfer to Secondary School, so some may not do as well as others. They are put into a totally different environment and unfortunately not all of them succeed like we want or expect them to.



I saw first-hand how they are doing their best in the settings they have to live and study in. Unfortunately, some may lose their scholarships, and some may not receive the grades needed to get into university, but after meeting these girls just being given the opportunity to even attend a Secondary School, no matter how they perform, is something life-changing and will give them the confidence to change their future.

The hardest thing I found when I started was how many girls came in that needed our help. For every eight girls, one was selected (and they’re just the ones who came to our gate asking for a scholarship). On average I worked out each girl had eight siblings, of whom most didn’t go to or complete Secondary School. I started to get a bit



disheartened and wondered, "Is any of this even doing anything for this country when more are still being born than what we can educate." However, while I was there I became good friends with a few of the ex-CHES students who were helping during our busy interview period. I talked to Edith (now a dedicated Secondary School teacher where some of the CHES girls attend) and Metrin. They told me their stories of how they came to be CHES students. "I really don't know where I would be without CHES" they both said and it made me realize I was looking at this all the wrong way. There is a reason why CHES has the motto "We can't do everything . . . but we can do something!" Not only are they now both strong and confident women, their education is helping provide for their families, which has a ripple effect to their community.

Edith and Metrin are just two of many of the amazing ex-CHES students I was fortunate to become friends with, but if I had to mention one more it would be the office manager, Rebecca. I have never met someone so passionate and involved with her work. Not only does she know all the ins and outs of the schooling system, being an ex-CHES student herself she knows what girls genuinely need the scholarship and is like a mother to all of them. I would like to thank her for all the hard work and long hours she puts in to make sure CHES Kenya runs as smoothly as it does.



Spending 3 1/2 months volunteering with CHES Kenya is an experience that I will never forget. The Kenyan people are so generous and kind. I loved the kids coming up to me on the street asking, "How are you?" and wanting to shake my hand. People would talk to me, wanting to know where I was from. Spending time there made me realize that not only is our sponsor money going to an organization that is putting it all back into the community by helping someone's education, but the girls who are benefitting from it are truly grateful. It changes their lives in ways you can't imagine, and I'm glad to have been a part of that.

by Naomi Andriessen

Additional Email Address Now Available

The eagle-eyed may have noticed an unfamiliar email address on the first page of this newsletter; CHES@CanadianHarambee.ca Due to an upgrade in our web hosting system we can now have email addresses ending in @canadianharambee.ca that we can use to check and send email worldwide instead of being limited to the Shaw service area. But no need to worry; should you wish to continue to send emails to our long-standing address canadianharambee@shaw.ca we'll still get them, although replies will come from our new address. The more tech savvy may wish to add our new email address to their safe sender list.



Don't Count Your Chickens!

On May 20 last year we received, out of the blue, an invitation from the Canadian High Commission in Dar es Salaam to apply for a grant from the Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives.

These grants of up to \$20,000 are presented annually to qualifying NGOs who focus on Women's Rights and the Empowerment of Women. We assumed we had been invited to apply because CHES is so ideally suited to receive such a grant.

The deadline was May 31 and so a great deal of work had to be done in a very short time to provide a submission that we felt would be appropriate. We envisaged a "Women's Empowerment and 'How to Say No' " course to occur coincidentally with our regular tutorial programme in June 2019. We tentatively engaged Magreth Maina, a CHES grad from 2000, to be our facilitator as she is already well known throughout Tanzania for running successful seminars on these topics.

The application had to be submitted from our office in Katesh which involved a further level of consultation and coordination; but we got it in on time.

In early July we received an email thanking us for our application and informing us that that we were not going to get it! There was no explanation and no indication as to who did receive any of the grants. We were all a tad disappointed.

A Plea from CHES Agents - WRITE!

One thing of huge importance is writing letters back to the girls that one sponsors. Some girls asked us agents while handing in their grades why their sponsor doesn't write to them. When we visited the schools we asked who received letters and were surprised at how few hands went up. We had to tell them to at least be thankful that you are getting the money to help you go to school. However sponsors, it only takes a few minutes to write a short note to your student to tell her you care and are proud of her effort to do well!

To put it another way, imagine you are a teenage girl, in boarding school, from a poor family in a third world country and you are RECEIVING LETTERS FROM SOMEONE IN CANADA! They all want to know about your country, family, and how you live.

If you don't have time to write, maybe a young neighbour, niece, or girl you know would love to have a Kenyan (or Tanzanian) pen pal.



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Josephine Muhandia

My name is Josephine Muhandia and I was born on April 12, 1993. I got a CHES sponsorship when I was 17 years old, going into Form 3. Before that I was attending a local secondary school in my village. I passed with high marks for my KCPE but my parents could not afford to enroll me in the provincial school that I was supposed to join. Being raised in a polygamous family, we experienced financial constraints. Money was never enough when split among all the three houses since my dad had 3 wives. My mother was the youngest wife, therefore we were the youngest children. I was the sixth born in a family of five girls and three boys.

Life became unbearable at the age of 16 because that is the year that I lost my father who was the sole provider for both school fees and our basic needs. My dad suffered from cancer for a very long time which we only came to realize during its final stage. It was cancer of the jaw but everyone thought that he just had problems with his dental health. Because of the effects he experienced tooth decay, stiffness in the jaw, difficulty in chewing, opening the mouth, and some inflammation in his tongue. Two months before his death, it had affected almost the whole right side of his jaw. He went to the hospital but it was too late. When the doctors operated on him, they believed they had removed the infected part. However, after a few weeks, it started to spread again. It caused so much pain, his jaw swelled, his teeth fell out, and the inside of his cheek was exposed due to an operation which failed to heal. He could barely eat and my mum would feed him through straws. We used to cry every day before we went to school in the morning and in the evening when we came back and saw my dad in such pain.

After a few weeks of suffering with pain and agony, my dad could not take it and finally succumbed to death. It was a sad and painful moment for us. After my father's burial, life was not good at all. Family rivalry unfolded itself with no pretense. For instance, my elder mum would not let us stay in the same homestead as her and forced us to go and build another house on the lower side of the farm. It cost my mum a lot of money considering the fact that she was a widow with no job or business. We ended up constructing a low level single house just to provide shelter for us. Pension money stopped coming and we became poorer. I lost my hope of going back to school for a while because I felt it was such a burden for my mother who was then a widow, jobless, and with no education. Throughout all this, my mother never lost her faith in God. She used to pray for the best and always thanked God for the little things that we had. She always encouraged us that one day God is going to open ways. We would attend church every Sabbath and we never stopped praying.

It didn't take long for God to answer our prayers because one day when my mother was in church, one of the choir members approached her and asked her if she was willing to apply for a sponsorship for young girls that was being



run by a Canadian organization. The initiative was to educate young and bright needy girls in secondary schools to help them achieve their dreams. After getting enough information, we set out to try our luck. We visited their office with report forms, birth certificates, and all the essential documents needed. We also drew them a map directing them to our home for the needs assessment. After completing the whole process, we were told to relax and wait for their feedback.



We were very excited when I was finally accepted and taken in by the CHES organization. Both my sister and I were transferred to a provincial school, Archbishop Njenga girls. I was in Form 3 then and she was in Form 2. We worked hard in school and I completed my high school in 2011. I later joined the University where I pursued a degree in Horticulture with IT. I am currently working with the Kenya Flower Council as an apprentice as I wait to graduate this year on December 1.

I want to thank the CHES community as it is because of them that my life has been transformed. I got a chance to finish my high school and university and be where

I am now. You have not only helped my sister and me but also reduced the burden from my mum for all the problems she was going through. Thank you so much.



Find Us on [Facebook!](#)

We will continue to post more photos, stories, and links on our Facebook page than we can possibly fit into this newsletter. Whether you are among the legion of nearly 1.5 billion active daily Facebook users, or an irregular visitor, please take a moment to check out the [@CanadianHarambee.ca](#) Facebook Page. Don't forget to "Like" us so that our stories appear in your newsfeed.

And if you are an enthusiastic Facebook user we'd appreciate you volunteering to help us out as a Facebook editor or contributor for our Page. Send us an email or message us if you are able to assist.



Agents Wanted

Interested in travelling to sunny Kenya to meet CHES students, assist our office manager, and travel to local schools? Agent volunteers are always welcome for one month or longer. For more information, please contact the CHES Office at (778) 565 - 5261.

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.

Magret Ushindi



My name is Magret Ushindi. I attended St. Kizito's -Lusumu mixed secondary school. I am from a polygamous family where my mother is the first wife. There are seven children from my mother and I am the fourth born.

I applied for a CHES scholarship because my family could not afford the fees for me to attend secondary school. I waited two years after I completed Standard 8 and then CHES helped me by providing a scholarship so I could get a secondary education. This secondary education acted as a ladder to university.

After completing secondary school I trained as a teacher and now I am teaching mathematics in a secondary school in the western part of Kenya.

Educational Improvement Continues for Tanzanian CHES Students

Did you know that 42 Form 4 CHES students in Tanzania were selected this year by the government to continue their studies in Form 5 and at a variety of colleges? We are proud of how hard they have worked to achieve this!

A special thank you to all the sponsors who have chosen to continue supporting their girl with her studies for the next two years of schooling. Several have also taken on another student who has just entered Form 1.

CHES' Annual Fundraising Campaign starts November 8th
Please read the email from CHES that day and then pass it along to your family and friends so they, too, can support CHES



A Happy Invasion!

Katesh is a small town with limited services but it is the headquarters of the CHES organization in Tanzania. Our office is in a 2 hectare compound that includes dormitory facilities, a dining/study hall, a wash-block, staff quarters, agent accommodation, and a small shamba where fruit and vegetables for the hostel girls are grown.

Arriving there next March will be approximately 34 Grade 12 students from Stellys Secondary School in Saanich near Victoria. They make up the Global Issues class of that school under the tutelage of teachers Chris McDonald and Kim Koenig. Each year as part of their coursework, the class visits a developing country during the Spring Break and participates in a project designed to “make a difference.”

If all goes according to plan, directors Chris and Catriona Harker will arrive in Katesh 2 or 3 weeks prior to the students’ arrival. Their task will be to work with our Tanzanian team to ensure that all is in readiness when the group arrives on March 16. Over the next 10 days the students will be driven on weekdays to Mwahu, 35 kms from Katesh, to assist a team of local construction workers erect a new dormitory for the female students of Mwahu Secondary School. Funding is due to come from the local education authority, the local ward council, and from the students themselves who hope to raise \$20,000 to support the project.

Interaction with CHES students, past and present, and visits to local points of interest will be scheduled during weekends and evenings. The task of accommodating and feeding such a large group will be a challenge but one that the CHES team will be sure to overcome.

Before they leave Tanzania, the students will have an opportunity to visit the wildlife parks of Tarangire, Lake Manyara, and Ngorongoro Crater. This trip will be a wonderful adventure for these soon-to-graduate students and, who knows? Perhaps some of them will return home and suggest to their parents that it might be a great idea to support a CHES girl for the next 4 years.

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.

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.

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

If you have any questions, please email CHES@CanadianHarambee.ca or call the CHES Office at (778) 565-5261 and we will be happy to respond to your questions about Legacy Giving to CHES.



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) continues to gather 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 and Facebook page. 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 2019 school year is due in December 2018. You should have received a note asking for your donation for 2019. 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 2019 or send monthly post-dated cheques for 2019 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 Joy Ruffeski (executive director) or Julia Kambeitz (secretary) at the CHES Office: Tel: 778-565-5261 or email: CHES@CanadianHarambee.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.

Are You Looking for a Unique Christmas Present?

The Call of Katesh is just what you need for that special someone who loves to read and/or travel. Chris and Catriona Harker have visited Katesh innumerable times since 2001. Chris' most recent publication entertainingly chronicles many of the events the Harkers have experienced and the people they have met.

This book would make an ideal Christmas gift for anyone interested in Tanzania or the work of a small but successful NGO.

ON SALE for \$12 if you pick it up at the CHES office. Please add \$3 if you wish it mailed.

