When Catriona and I visited a school in Central Saanich, B.C. in November 2017 to support a retired colleague who was being honored, we had no idea we would be caught up in a demanding but fulfilling exercise that would culminate 16 months later.

There was also a fundraiser at Stelly's Secondary that night. The Global Perspectives class was raising money for their forthcoming trip to India. This class, spanning 2 years and team-taught by Chris McDonald and Kim Koenig, promotes a social conscience and the concept of “giving back”. In the Grade 11 year the focus is domestic; in Grade 12, it targets international support. In this final year, the students go abroad during their March Break and volunteer their physical labour – plus the funds they have raised – at a project determined by the host nation. The class has existed for quite a time and has visited such places as Peru, Nepal, and India.

Catriona and I got into conversations with students which lead to discussions about CHES and our frequent visits to Tanzania. It was an enjoyable evening that we thought little more about as we drove home.

Two weeks later we received a call from Chris McDonald. In summary, he said that the group had never been to an African country but might be interested in going if someone could help to arrange things on the ground and find a worthwhile project. We had no problem determining who the “some ones” might be.
We were immediately intrigued and told him that we were going to be in Katesh in March 2018 and once there, would see what we could do.

In Tanzania, with the help of our CHES Treasurer, Naomi Saulo, we found the ideal project. The girl’s hostel (dorm) at Mwahu Secondary school stunk of bat and rat feces, had holes in the walls (a beehive in one of them), rotting timbers, and tiny bunks with decaying mattresses that two girls had to share. More than 100 girls slept in these conditions.

The school, the local village community and the local district administration were all excited; the idea of re-building the hostel even with modest financial support, seemed to galvanize everyone. All parties concerned said that they too would find a way to lend support either in kind or financially.

With this in our back pockets, we set about considering accommodation, food, and transport for a group of (ultimately) 41 students and supervisors. Katesh is not Vancouver. Nevertheless, the Summit Hotel had a large meeting-eating area and enough rooms – if the students shared a double bed – for everyone to cram in. Mama Kibwoge, whom we have used to cater our CHES get-togethers on occasion, was persuaded to provide two meals a day (the hotel offering breakfast). And Ricco de Souza, owner of Arumeru Tours and Safaris whose services we have used for nearly 20 years, took on the task of arranging bus transportation from the airport to Arusha, for the onward 250 kms to Katesh, and for the daily 35 kms shuttle back and forth to the worksite. In addition, he coordinated the final 3-day wildlife park visit.

Over the course of the 2018-19 school year, Catriona and I visited the class numerous times: to introduce the students to Tanzania, to describe the project, and to mention the inevitable do’s and don’ts. We were also in almost constant communication with Naomi, Ricco, and others to make sure that things were happening at Mwahu. We were delighted to learn, shortly before Christmas, that the villagers had found a rock source and collected a huge pile to be used for the foundation and further, that the district administration had donated a truck so that the rocks could be transported to the site.

In late February, we flew to Tanzania as the “advance party” and spent a busy two weeks going over as many details as possible and filling the internet with messages back and forth to the school.

We met the group at Kilimanjaro airport on March 16 and we all drove to Katesh on two 24-seat buses the following day. We were soon at the worksite where the foundation’s perimeter and interior walls had already been dug, filled and capped. The initial task then was to level, fill with a rock base and then cement the entire floor area of nearly 5000 sq. ft. To accomplish this, students carried 233 bags of cement each weighing 50 kgs onto the site from the delivery point approximately 100 meters away. The sand, rocks, and mixed cement were laid by hand as not even a wheelbarrow was available. The conveyance of choice was an empty cement sack.
We can't do everything . . . but we can do something!

held by two people with the sand, rocks, or mixed cement dumped in the fold. It was a monster task but with a workforce of between 50 and 60 workers, the job was completed in five days. Our students were helped by one class a day from the school, a number of villagers, and about 8 fundis (professional tradesmen) who oversaw the project. During the second week, 18 kg bricks (7000 of them) were moved from where they'd been unloaded to begin the actual walls. The hostel was by no means completed by the time they departed but the building was well underway and we were all assured that construction would continue until completion.

The Stelly’s kids contributed about $17,000 towards the estimated construction costs of $90,000. The balance will be made up from a $21 assessment on every family in the ward and sundry contributions, often in kind from the District authorities.

When not at work, the students had opportunities to visit a boma (traditional homestead), a nearby salt lake, climb 11,000 ft Mt. Hanang, play sports and other games with our hostel girls and the students at Mwahu, study local cooking methods, go for walks, attend church services, visit three primary schools (to which Catriona was taking books and school supplies), attend the impressive opening and closing ceremonies at Mwahu, watch movies with CHES hostel girls, climb the Bong Rock – famous in this area, learn how to do bead work, practice the art of tinga tinga painting, view a political rally after a personal meeting with the local MP, visit a school for disabled children, have clothes made and, on their last day in Katesh, attend the monthly Mnada (Market). Their final days included guided tours of three of Tanzania’s iconic wildlife parks.

All the students were wonderfully positive and skilled at mixing in and interacting with their counterparts at Mwahu and with the hostel girls. Medical issues were limited to a few dodgy tummies. The logistics of feeding and accommodating such a large group in a town like Katesh were challenging but thanks to the assistance provided by the CHES administrators, everything fell into place.

It was a unique visit and one never to be forgotten by those who went nor by those with whom they interacted. A remarkable bonus for us came on the final day when it transpired that four CHES girls were going to be sponsored by group members.

On April 1, as we were all about to board to plane to return to Canada, teachers Chris and Kim pulled us aside to ask, “If we came back next year, do you think you could find another project for us”? The serious look on their faces suggested it was not an April Fool’s joke.

by Chris Harker
Strawberry Vale School Fundraiser

Teacher Kiersten Brooks, students Yuvi, Mateo, Lola, Ariel, Rhyley, and Sara presented CHES Director Catriona Harker with gifts for Roda and letters for Tanzanian students which she delivered in February.

Strawberry Vale Elementary School in Victoria, BC has supported Canadian Harambee Education Society (CHES) girls in Katesh since 2002. They have just completed another successful Fundraising Campaign to support Roda who is now in Form III (Grade 10) in Tanzania. She is the fifth girl they have supported. Their annual “Toonies for Tanzania” Fundraiser brought in $700 for their girl and the staff fundraising for Tanzanian primary school books and supplies raised an additional $420.

The program at Strawberry Vale has been enthusiastically supported by all staff and parents. Teacher Jen Horton has been instrumental in the organization for many years and invites me each year to update the students about the progress of their girl and to include different aspects of life in a developing country and integrate information about Tanzania’s geography, wildlife, and current issues. A great learning experience for the students and a rewarding gift of a lifetime for Roda!!

Well done Strawberry Vale from all of us at CHES!

by Catriona Harker

TAX RECEIPT CHANGES COMING

WE NEED YOUR UPDATED EMAIL INFORMATION

We have updated our accounting software in the CHES office and in the coming months will start issuing tax receipts by email for your scholarship monies and donations rather than mailing them out with your student’s letters. Upon receiving it, please file it away with other tax receipts or keep it in a file on your computer to access at tax time. Each spring, at tax time, Julia receives many requests for duplicate ones as people have misplaced them. With postal rates increasing yearly this will save mailing costs as well.

Please ensure that we have your current email address or if you change providers that you update that information for CHES so that you receive your tax receipts immediately once we process and deposit your donations.

For those that do not have email, rest assured that you will continue to receive your donation receipts by post. A reminder that those who donate through Canada Helps receive their receipts from them and not from the CHES office.

CHES Celebrates with Sara Martha Anyika

Sara’s graduation from the Technical University of Mombasa took place on Dec. 19, 2018. She celebrated her first undergraduate degree in Tourism Management after 5 years of study. She dedicates all this success to CHES because were it not for CHES she wouldn’t have stepped foot in the university.

Here are her words: “I remember way back in 2012 I was just volunteering at CHES office after failing to raise enough funds to join college and feeling like a big let down to my dreams and goals. Along came a CHES agent (I call her Mom Colleen Gatenby). It was her first time in Africa, so she requested me to be her assistant and show her around while helping with office work at CHES. She ended up changing my life when she offered to give me a scholarship to university. This has been my biggest motivation to give back to CHES for the great things I have received since 2008 when I arrived for my high school scholarship interview. Thank you so much CHES. This is not just my story, but a story of many other beautiful girls that have been sponsored by CHES.”
Hallo CHES Canada - A Former CHES Student Interviews Agents and Students

This is Irene Nasimiyu one of the CHES beneficiaries, and I want to appreciate you for the effort you put to ensure that bright needy girls attend to education.

I was so happy and privileged to interview the agents and CHES Kenya Board during the Form 4 graduation party and it's my pleasure to also share with you the audio of this interview. To hear this interview on your computer/tablet/or smart phone, open the newsletter with Acrobat Reader, click the empty looking box below for the MP3 audio of the interview with many former CHES students, the agents who were there this fall/winter, and a CHES Kenya board member. You may actually hear the voice of the girl who you sponsored.

Hearty thanks to all of you and may we continue to shine as we bring light to our communities.

If I get an opportunity to meet you, I really would want to write a feature story on how you fundraise to ensure that a girl goes to school.

by your Kenyan daughter, Irene Nasimiyu
LubaoFM community radio station

CHEBAK News

The 5th CHES Alumni (CHEBAK) AGM was held on Dec. 26, 2018, at the Logmma Hotel, a short distance away from the new CHES office. This annual forum brings together CHES beneficiaries. We use this platform to reunite, network, share our success stories, and even come up with projects to aid in our effort to give back our society.

So far we’ve done projects such as (Pads for Girls initiative, student mentorship programs, charity events for children homes, purchased school shopping for CHES girls, and currently are sponsoring our very first girl (Miriam Ololo, in Mukumu Girls High School) through CHES.

All this has been achieved by the CHES alumni through a span of 5 years with the great aid of local fundraising among ourselves. Over the years we’ve always been honored to have the current CHES agents join us.

Finally I want to sincerely thank the CHES Canada community for everything you have done for us selflessly. We will forever be indebted. We highly acknowledged the generous support we’ve received and look forward to continue working together to fulfill the CHES goals. Thank you, thank you so very much.

by Sarah Martha Anyika
CHES Beneficiaries Alumni of Kakamega (CHEBAK)

Volunteers Needed

CHES is desperately in need of two volunteers with the following talents.

• Accounting skills: Ability to issue receipts, enter data using the Simply Accounting program, work with spread sheets, and maintain balances. Time commitment is estimated at half a day every 2 weeks in our office located in Surrey (Surrey Teachers' Association building, 9030 King George Blvd.).

• Maintain our website (www.canadianharambee.ca). To post and update material as and when received using “Word Press”. Time commitment perhaps 1 hour a week and from anywhere with wifi.

If able to assist in either of these two areas, please contact Joy at CHES@canadianharambee.ca or 778 565 5261
Wood Versus Gas

Deforestation is one of the most serious problems Tanzania has to deal with. Close to 95% of every meal is cooked using charcoal or wood and with a population approaching 60 million and a climate that sends rain only 4 months in an average year, the growth rate of trees does not pretend to keep up with the rate of harvesting. Nor is there an enforced policy of re-planting.

If this were to continue, this wonderful country would, in short order, become a virtual desert.

The government has stepped in to decree that from January 2021, no cooking can occur with wood or charcoal. It is difficult to imagine this being an enforceable law as a relatively small percentage of the population will be able to afford the most logical alternative; a gas stove attached to a portable tank.

When the Dominican Republic mandated a “no cutting” rule in the late 50s it provided a subsidized gas stove and tank to every family for a nominal $5. Ten years later the country was overflowing with foliage while Haiti, on the other half of the island, remained barren.

It is hard to imagine Tanzania providing gas stoves to every family as the cost to a much larger population would be considerable. But the initiative has to start somewhere and with this in mind, the Sara Williams Hostel in Katesh is hoping to abandon wood in favor of gas. Once the capital cost of purchasing the stoves and tanks is overcome (estimated to be about $3,000 for our kitchen that serves nearly 90 girls daily and over 300 during the bi-annual assemblies) the cost of gas will ultimately be less than the ever-increasing cost of wood.

Should any reader feel called upon to help with some of this unbudgeted funding, we will be able to implement this initiative sooner rather than later.

by Chris Harker

A Special Thank You

A special thank you to the R.R. Smith Memorial Foundation of the BC Retired Teachers’ Association for their generous grant of $2,000 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, the R.R. Smith Memorial Fund is in the 2nd year of their sponsorship of a Kenyan student with CHES. Their continued support of education of girls through CHES is much appreciated.
Find Us on Facebook!

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.

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.

A Memorial Garden for our Kenyan Home

As you are aware Louise Paulsen, our longtime treasurer and CHES director, passed away a year ago. Her daughter requested that, rather than flowers, individuals donate to CHES in her memory. In addition, a group of supporters (Team Tedone) from the US have supported CHES for several years in memory of Sydney Tedone who was an advocate for education of girls in Africa. The funds they raised, over that of their sponsorship of several girls, will also go towards the Kakamega Memorial Garden and Shelter project, with a special corner dedicated to Sydney.

As a result, we will be building a memorial garden and shelter at our home in Kenya. As there is no landscaping of any type currently on the property and no shelter for the girls when they apply for their scholarships or bring in their marks three times yearly, this is a much needed and appreciated project. Work should begin shortly.

Katesh: A Weekend of Workshops and So Much More

Looking back, I still find it hard to believe that so much could be packed into a “long weekend.” For me, the experience was warm, welcome, busy but largely known. This was my 6th trip since 2008. Each of us would be doing a workshop with the girls on Saturday.

A retired ESL teacher, it was Gayvin Franson’s second visit to Katesh and the CHES hostel, but his first opportunity to meet Veronica, the CHES girl he’s sponsoring. This was without a doubt the highlight of Gayvin’s visit. “We had exchanged a few letters, but I was blown away by her poise and presence and her level of English. I had brought her some ESL reference books and she impressed me with her knowledge of how to use them (finding the desired page through the index). I, and I think she, will treasure the short time we had together. There were tears when we said goodbye.” As during his 2017 visit, Gayvin introduced the girls to the harmonica. “Some of the older girls who had worked with me two years ago had obviously continued to work and improve on their own. The newer girls started off shyly, but quickly got over this and enthusiastically tackled a new skill. They laughed at their own attempts, but not at those of their fellows. It was great to again meet the staff and volunteers at the hostel. They are so committed to the girls and making the whole thing work. They help and mentor each other and this bears fruit over the four years that each girl is there.”

For the other gentlemen, this was their first visit to Tanzania. Robert Clipperton, also a retired high school and ESL teacher, commented: “I was initially skeptical regarding the whole sponsorship model… CHES seems to have designed a fundraising model that avoids the first world patronization and ‘pity the children’ that some organizations have used to generate funds, and at the delivery point, avoided the pitfalls of delivering supports to individuals.” He went on to say, “Everyone we met was so warm and friendly. Maybe this is a part of rural culture that we used to have here in Saskatchewan only more polite.” Robert’s workshop involved string games (such as cat’s cradle). “The girls were enthusiastic, persistent, and engaged which is the best a teacher can hope for.”
David Meyer, a retired anthropology professor, was “surprised by the size of the complex and how well kept everything was…the sense that the students were well looked after and pleased with their lives at the hostel.” His art workshop involved both the Kondoa Tanzania rock art and Canadian rock art images. “I was gratified by their engagement in the art project and how they maintained their focus throughout and were keen to do their best.”

David Dodds, a retired professor of electrical engineering, was most surprised by “the size of the compound, the perfectly weeded gardens, the rainwater collection systems, and the spartan dormitories.” He was impressed by “the value conveyed by a sponsorship. This is a super-efficient operation.” Partnering with Naomi for his ballroom dancing workshop, the girls reciprocated with a line dance, a learning experience for David!

I had the pleasure of visiting with two of the girls whom I’ve sponsored, one of whom I’ve known for 11 years. Shy and tongue-tied in Form I, they have grown to be mature, personable, and competent young women. One is employed in local government administration, the other has just finished Form IV and is applying for further education. What more could one ask for?

My workshop involved reading traditional Tanzanian folk tales in English. One of the Form III girls, Irene, translated the stories back to Swahili for the younger girls whose command of English was more limited. In almost two hours, she only came across three words that stumped her!

As in so many activities, we received much more than we gave. Appreciation, yes. But also love, warmth, and insight into another culture, one I’ve treasured since I first taught in Tanzania in the early 1960s.

by Sara Williams

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 and ask to have Bev Ford, our director in charge of agents, return your call.

We have a clean, secure home in Kakamega where you would live. The house is only a 10 minute walk to the nearest “shopping centre” where you can buy almost 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.
A Legacy From Louise Paulsen

Soon after we arrived in Katesh the first of five picnic tables - a legacy provided Louise’s will - was delivered and welcomed with delight. It and the others to come will be placed in shaded areas of the CHES compound for the girls to sit, chat, relax, and ponder schoolwork. One or more will be under this lovely huge spreading tree on which we will ultimately place a memorial plaque.

Asante Mama Louise!

by Chris Harker

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.

Speaking Out for Women

Magreth graduated in 2001. CHES truly made a difference for this girl from a simple family: her father has 8 wives and she has 40 siblings but this has not stopped her from advocating for female rights.

Well recognized nationally, she speaks out on women’s rights and issues all over Tanzania. On International Women’s Day she was interviewed on Tanzanian national television about female genital mutation. Her interview (albeit in Swahili) is available for viewing on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uCcUcoAqgw

Gayvin Visits His Student: Veronica

She is now 16, and moving into Form III. I don’t have her final Form II results yet, but her mid-term standing was in the top quarter of her class of 182 students at Katesh Secondary School. Her best friend is Tasiana, another student at the school (where they also have a maize and bean farm that the students weed and harvest). Her goal is to become a doctor and her favourite subjects are math and sciences. In September 2017 she, and some others, climbed the nearby Mt. Hanang.

Veronica is from Hombap village near Katesh town. She lives with her father and paternal grandparents. Her mother “ran away”. Her father is a farmer, growing maize and beans for food and they “keep cows & goats”. She lives at the Sara Williams hostel during the school year.

My time with her was far too short. She has agreed to be my
Why CHES Sponsors Girls

I often get asked why CHES sponsors only girls. A year and a half in the bush with no electricity and no running water was a good reality check for me. I saw the non-tourist Africa and I learned much about the culture.

On the good side, I saw the hard-working, generous, and wonderful people who strived for better a life for their children.

But I also had a glimpse of the dark side, the underbelly of a misogynistic society. With attitudes that undervalued young women, they were vulnerable from the time they were born to adulthood, and even beyond.

Attached is a link to an article that I hope you will read. It was written by Buumba Malambo, a ward councilor in Zambia.

https://www.facebook.com/buumbamalamboofficialpage/posts/2238664436391088?__tn__=K-R

When you read the following article, try not to weep. Understand what CHES is trying to do. We are not just educating; we are protecting them. Women of Africa are calling on women to protect their girl-children.

I’m heartened, also by the fathers I have met who cherish their daughters and want them educated. We won’t do everything, but we will continue to do something.

by Lorrie Williams

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SAVE THE DATE!

CHES ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Date:** Saturday, October 5, 2019  
**Time:** Refreshments & Social - 1:30 p.m.; AGM - 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.  
**Place:** New Westminster Public Library - downstairs meeting room  
716 6th Ave., New Westminster

There are bus stops close to the library on both 6th Street and 6th Avenue. The library is directly across the street from the Royal City Shopping Centre. Spaces are limited in library parking lot.