

Canadian Harambee Education Society

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

Winter 2020 Newsletter #69



My CHES Journey



My name is Joanne Nabwire. My life began in a small village called Mavusi in Kabras North, Kakamega County, Kenya though I wasn't born there. Life took a plummet after both my parents lost their jobs and we had to relocate to our rural home. Life wasn't easy at all. Being from a polygamous family made things even harder. Going through primary education was a miracle to date. Most of the days me and my siblings would be spent home because of little things needed by the school that cost money. However, I did sit for my Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) in 1998 and passed. Then began my days of crying. Nothing could afford me going to school. Neighbours and villagers laughed at me and my parents asking why they hadn't planned for my secondary education. One person clearly said to my face that whatever education I had had was enough and that I should get married to support my siblings, after all, my mother was the second wife and her children would suffer most. I cried myself to sleep that night.

On learning about CHES, my mom and I walked a very long distance (about 14km) just to get to the main road before boarding a vehicle to the CHES offices then based in Lurambi, Kakamega. Fact is, there was no money for fare. But my dream of education and a better future for me and my siblings was my driving force. Upon reaching the CHES office, I filled in the required documents and handed them over awaiting the verdict. We waited and waited but no response came. I asked my mum if I could go back and check to try find out why. We walked back to CHES and received the most shocking news: I hadn't been contacted because my documents were incomplete, in my application I hadn't attached my results and for

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that, I had been left out. So I began crying and begging to be given another chance. One of the agents at that time was touched to the extent she said she'll try and do something about it. Well, in the end, she and her family (Mary Steeves and Cook family) became my sponsor. I went back home and I remember vividly how my parents danced when I told them that I had been given a chance. The look of relief, the tears of joy and the expression of gratitude on our faces was enough to make us forget our pain and suffering.

I joined Butere Girls high school in 1999 and completed in 2002. My sponsor would at one point visit me in school and I was the happiest girl that day. I later joined Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) where I pursued bachelor's degree in education. This was made possible through a scholarship by (African Canadian Continuing Education Society (ACCES). I graduated in 2008 and was awarded a scholarship by MMUST to study for a post graduate degree. I enrolled for master of education in curriculum and instruction in the same university and graduated in 2013. I was offered a job as a lecturer at MMUST in the department of Curriculum and Instructional Technology where I work to date. I am currently pursuing a PhD in curriculum and instruction at Kisii University, Kenya.

CHES made me see that I can become somebody in life. Without CHES I would have been with nothing to look forward to. Without CHES, my life would have been full of sadness, crying and frustrated and shattered dreams. CHES lit the path to my success, it shined my steps by giving me the gift of second chance through education, and I am because of CHES. Asante CHES.

The Story of My Life

My name is Maria Julius Churi. I am 27 years old and live in Katesh with my family. I have both my parents and we have 9 children in my family.

I am so grateful to be an educated woman and I thank God for bringing me to CHES who helped me to get an education. I was among the students who were chosen by CHES to continue with my secondary education and I was fortunate enough to live in the Sara Williams hostel while I attended Ganana Secondary School for 4 years. I got good marks in my National examinations in 2012 and studied "A" levels at Kaliua High School where I took Chemistry, Biology, and Geography.

After completing my Advanced Level education I went to Mtabila JKT for army exercises for three months and then after that to university for three years to pursue my B.Sc. in Family and Consumer Science. I thank God for the sponsors from CHES who supported me from secondary and high school. I enjoyed their support and kindness and then received Government support in order to complete my university studies.

I am now at home and waiting for a job. Through education I am now able as a nutritionist to help people and the community on health issues, especially on how to get healthy by eating a balanced diet in all stages of their life. Because health is so important we have to make sure we get a balanced diet – something that is a challenge in Tanzania.

I thank God I still have good communications with the CHES office and members. I am so happy to see their love and kindness to me.

I pray to God to help me get a job soon and then I will do it well to help my family economically. I will never forget how CHES supported me in my life. May God bless you all.



2019 AGM

The CHES annual general meeting was held October 5 in New Westminster, with 24 members. Everyone told how they became involved in CHES. They had interesting stories to tell and expressed how important CHES was to them.



Joy Ruffeski, the executive director, reported that over 80% of the Kenyan CHES girls finishing Form 4 qualify for immediate acceptance into university and all those who complete Forms 5 and 6 in Tanzania are also accepted into the university and program of their choice. Joy spent July in Katesh, facilitating the changeover of CHES Hanang from a society to an NGO status as required by new Tanzanian legislation. Joy visited every school currently attended by CHES students, meeting all our Tanzanian girls and updating our database on each school.

Joy reported we currently have a total of 550 girls attending 13 different secondary schools in Kenya and Tanzania. All of the Kenyan schools are boarding schools. In Tanzania there are 325 girls in Forms 1-6 in secondary schools. In May 2019, 27 CHES grads in Tanzania began attending various universities. They are no longer supported by CHES (our mandate is only to assist students in secondary school) but both the Tanzanian and Kenyan governments provide students loans while they attend university.

Bev Ford reported on Kenya. Agents Mandy Klepic, a founding member and former director, and first-time volunteers Wilma and Dave Wessel interviewed and screened over 200 new Form 1 students. In addition, four very needy deaf students were chosen to attend St. Angela's School for the Deaf. The agents were involved in a number of other activities, including meeting with patrons and students at eight schools, attending workshops and being available for students' individual concerns. CHEBAK (the CHES alumni group) visited an elementary school and gave presentations on topics such as the value of education and how to avoid interruption of schooling due to pregnancy.



Catriona and Chris Harker reported on Tanzania. They met with CHES staff and the District Commissioner. They also consulted with local people in regard to the accommodation, meals, and transportation of the 36 BC students from Stelly's Secondary School who worked on the Mwahu hostel project. Thanks to a number of generous special donations, the Sara Williams Hostel has changed from wood to propane for cooking. This helps to reduce deforestation in Tanzania. The hostel accommodates and provides meals for 85 girls who attend five local schools. Our treasurer in Tanzania, Naomi Saulo, donated her Land Cruiser so that girls can be transported to the two more distant schools. CHES House in Katesh had several visitors in 2019: Rob and Jeanette Taylor, Chris and Catriona Harker, 36 Stelly's Secondary School students, two teachers, a doctor, and Joy Ruffeski.

The following were elected to be members of the CHES Board for the coming year:

Nadia Anderson	Orrie Babiuk	Beverly Ford
Catriona Harker	Chris Harker	Karen Kilbride
Nancy Mann	Joy Ruffeski	Lorrie Williams

A highlight of the AGM was Catriona Harker's slide presentation outlining the current work and successes of CHES In Kenya and Tanzania. We saw photos of the Stelly's Secondary School students in March as they helped construct a girl's dorm at Mwahu, the Kenyan CHES House with the ongoing gardens in memory of Louise Paulsen and Sydney Tedone, and many wonderful pictures of agents and of our CHES students.



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The Kakamega CHES House and Office

Since the completion of the new CHES house two years ago, the focus has been on improving the compound as a whole. The enhancement has been significant.

The “shade shelter” is perhaps the most impressive and positive addition. Now significant numbers of parents and students coming to apply for scholarships no longer have to stand in the sun. Instead they can all sit in the shade. As Kenya has been subjected to record rainfalls in recent months, the CHES staff is now referring to the new structure as the “rain shelter.” A mural of Louise Paulsen has been painted by a local artist on the wall at the back of the shelter, as it has been a bequest from her estate that covered all costs.

Nearby is a new gazebo, which is another smaller, attractive, and intimate shelter where private conversations can be held. Funds for this structure were raised by Team Tedone in memory of Sydney Tedone, a young American woman who was an advocate for education of girls in Africa. This group also sponsors 4 CHES students in Kenya.

In addition to these structures, a concrete parking pad has been constructed and stone pathways installed, both very useful at this time because of the rain. Further enhancements to our landscaping include a number of flower pots, plants, and shrubs. Everything grows much faster in Kenya than in Canada so it won't be long before our compound will appear green and luxurious. All funding for this comes from the two bequests mentioned and from targeted fund-raising done by Larry and Linda Huber (current agents in Kakamega).

by Chris Harker



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A Student's Experience in Katesh

Mike Jung (in the red shirt) was one of the students who visited Katesh last March. He was asked to reflect on his visit.

I want to start off by thanking every single one of you who was a part of my incredible trip to Tanzania. I'm very grateful to have this opportunity to share and reminisce on the best trip I have ever experienced.



When I first arrived in Tanzania, I thought my main objective was to give a lending hand to help build a women's dormitory for a school because the one there was basically broken down. What I didn't anticipate was how much of an amazing experience it would be and how much knowledge I would gain back. Interacting with all of you and other community members in Katesh was super fun and special. One of the biggest things I learned in my time in Tanzania is that I realized that happiness can be achieved in so many different ways. I also learned that getting out of my comfort zone allows me to gain valuable experience and knowledge. When it was time for me to leave Tanzania, I left with a very uneasy feeling because I felt that I didn't give back enough to the community compared to what the community gave me during my trip.

I really wish we as a whole class were able to finish the dorm before we left. I just want to thank all of you again for giving me a new perspective on life that has changed me forever. I'd love to come back and visit you all again in the near future.

by Mike Jung

Stelly's Returns!

Last year CHES directors Chris and Catriona Harker coordinated a new project for students at Stelly's Secondary School in Central Saanich on Vancouver Island. The Harkers escorted 36 Grade 12 students to Katesh, where they helped local students construct a 20-room hostel for girls at Mwahu School, 35 km out of town.

When not at the work site, the Canadian students engaged in a variety of activities that provided them with an insight into rural life in Tanzania. The venture was considered such a success by everyone involved that Stelly's have asked, "Can we do it again?"

So plans are presently underway for Chris and Catriona to fly into Katesh in early March to prepare for the 18 students who will arrive during their spring break on March 15. The Harkers will work with our local CHES executive in Katesh to ensure that all necessary arrangements, including accommodation, meals, and local transportation, are organized. More importantly, the new project has to be ready to go when the students arrive.



This year, a smaller project has been chosen. The students will help construct a library at Dumbeta Secondary School. Dumbeta is attended by many CHES girls and is walking distance from Katesh. Thanks to a successful gala fund-raising evening at Stelly's Secondary School in December, the students anticipate being able to donate close to \$15,000 towards to cost of construction.

Many of the off-duty activities that were so successful last year will be repeated this March. This includes, towards the end of their visit, two days of game drives in Tanzania's iconic national parks.

Last year the CHES program in Katesh and life in rural Tanzania made such an impression on the students (and their parents who were later told of it) that it led to the lives of six local girls being changed, thanks to CHES scholarships donated by the group and individuals within it. Hopefully the visit this year will have a similar impact.

by Chris Harker



Thank You Sponsors

Thank you again for submitting the student sponsor fees for this 2020 school year. Another school year in Kenya and Tanzania is well underway. Due to your generosity many girls are able to attend and work toward their graduation from secondary school.

If you have not recently received a letter from your sponsored girl, you should soon receive one along with her marks and learn more of her accomplishments. Please take the time to write and tell her a little about yourself and life in Canada: even a postcard is treasured by your girl as she knows you care about her personally!

CHES Kenya - Life Skills Workshop

In late November, 196 CHES students gathered at the Kakamega Multipurpose Development Training Institute in Kenya for what is developing into an annual CHES workshop. At this, life skills, rather than purely academic skills, are the focus of the three-day event.

A staff of 28--many of them CHES grads--were on hand to provide helpful advice, knowledge and support to our students. Some of the topics presented included Reproductive Health and Hygiene, Assertiveness, Critical Thinking, Youth and Technology, Self Esteem, Study Skills, Career Options, and Smart Transition to Adulthood. These are the building blocks that help to develop confidence, resourcefulness and maturity.

The CHES students attend 10 different schools in and around Kakamega so this is one of the rare occasions when our girls all get together. The socializing leads to the establishing of firm friendships, many of which, based on past experience, last well into adulthood.

CHES agents Larry and Linda Huber reported that on many occasions the huge and positive impact of CHES Canada on the education of Kenyan young women was acknowledged by not only the Board and Chair, but also by facilitators and the current students. Often this appreciation was rendered through song and poetry.

by Chris Harker



Notice to American CHES Sponsors – Address Correction

In the last newsletter, the address for the Humanist Society was incorrect. If you are sponsoring a CHES student, you may send your donation to the **Humanist Society at 1821 Jefferson Place NW, Washington, DC 20036**

And they will issue a US tax receipt. The money is then forwarded to CHES and we will notify sponsors when it is received.

We are sorry for any inconvenience this might have caused.



Adventurers, CHES Sponsors, Contributors, and Volunteers!

Interested in supporting the CHES program in Kakamega, Kenya? Volunteers are always welcome for short or long visits to our modern house/office facility. Check earlier newsletters for information and exciting accounts of agents' past experiences and the website for agents information.

For further information, contact ches@canadianharambee.ca or (778) 565-5261.

A Sponsor Visits Katesh

Sara Williams first went to Tanzania as a Peace Corps volunteer in the early 60s. She now lives in Saskatoon. Since retiring, she has become a staunch CHES supporter and has visited Tanzania many times. She is always sure to include Katesh to enjoy a visit with the girls who board at the Sara Williams Hostel, so named as Sara raised a large percentage of the funds needed to build it. Below is an excerpt from her Christmas letter describing her most recent visit.

Then to Katesh, the small town where the CHES hostel is located. The hostel is amazing. In a warm and loving atmosphere in which the older girls mentor the younger ones, it accommodates up to 100 girls who have won CHES scholarships.

These young women are mostly from distant villages and otherwise would have no place to live while attending one of



the five government secondary schools in or near Katesh. Besides the four dormitories, there is a kitchen, a large dining hall-study hall, a shower and bathroom block, a house for the matron who looks after the whole operation on a day-to-day basis, a guest house, CHES office, and meeting space – all neat as a pin and beautifully landscaped with fruit and shade trees, flowering shrubs, flower beds, and a huge area of vegetable plots that the girls look after.

It was wonderful to see the two young woman (Fabiola and Sara) I've been sponsoring for a number of years, one now employed in the local Agriculture office, the other attending a teacher training college.

Naomi and Bernadetta run the entire Tanzanian CHES operation. A visitor is like part of an extended family while in Katesh, sharing meals and cups of tea in different homes, meeting families. Sunday afternoon there is always a constant stream of visitors with hugs (and tears) coming and going. It is so good!

by Sara Williams

Margaret and Lorrie

If you have viewed the CBC documentary Educating Margaret, you would be familiar with two former CHES students: Margaret Maywaka and her daughter, Lorrie Rowena Mukarazi. You cannot imagine my delight when Lorrie told me that she had arranged for her mother to visit Canada.

I was fortunate enough to spend a day with Margaret and reminisce about the path that took us both from Khumusalaba to New Westminster.

I looked at her and I knew I was at the top of the Maslow hierarchy of needs: self-actualization. I know without a doubt that my last 30+ years involvement with CHES were not wasted. John Donne said "any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind". Well, each girl's success enhances us for we are involved. We did something!

by Lorrie Williams



The Essence of CHES

- *How does sponsorship through CHES impact the lives of girls who wouldn't otherwise be able to attend The Sacred Heart Mukumu Girls High School in Kenya?*

The simple answer is if our girls don't get scholarships to attend Mukumu or other Secondary Schools in Kenya and Tanzania, their education would end at the end of Elementary School. They all come from traditional, subsistence families or from those who have had tragic times economically because of the deaths or illnesses of one or two parents. Most of the families are polygamous and often when tragedy befalls them, women are left with several children and not the means to feed or clothe them properly, never mind providing them with health care or a secondary education. Their homes do not have electricity or running water and the distance to the nearest well or standing pipe can be very far. Night falls shortly after 6 p.m. because of the latitude so dim candles light their evenings.

If the girls were left unsupported by us or other charitable organizations, a girl could either die young or continue in the cycle of poverty, one of many wives or abandoned women with too many children to provide properly for. The positive results of equal Secondary Education for girls span economics, health, welfare, and the emotional well being of people from every aspect of society.

In both Tanzania and Kenya many of our CHES girls go on to higher education and ultimately find jobs and professions in all walks of life. Some are involved in establishing government policies, others in business, science, medicine, teaching, etc. But we also have girls for whom school is a real challenge and just pass or finish Form 4 with minimum marks. We have found, however, that the lives of these girls although they have less "bragable" careers, when we visit them, we discover that they too have benefitted immensely from attending secondary school. When they marry, they have cleaner more sanitary homes, one husband and fewer, healthier, educated children. They also help to support surviving parents, educate siblings or cousins, continue educating themselves personally, contribute to decision making in their local villages, and through entrepreneurial endeavours contribute financially to their own family's survival.

Because our girls come from families with no or very limited cash incomes, as well as paying for school fees, CHES provides for other costs such as boarding fees, school lunches in non-boarding schools, school uniforms, text books, and travel costs to and from school. They also receive "pocket money" each term to buy school supplies and basic personal needs such as female hygiene products, soap, toothpaste, etc.

- *How does sponsorship support the wellness of sponsored students?*

A girl who comes from a simple subsistence background to attend Secondary School where children from more affluent homes form the majority, is exposed to a lifestyle to which she learns to adapt. Manners, vocabulary, and poise are enhanced. She enjoys better food, clean water, and proper clothes and has overall a healthier and more hygienic lifestyle - to which she also adjusts and chooses to emulate. Schools impose routine, structure, and discipline; although these might not be appreciated at the time, they are remembered and employed later.

Once a year, CHES provides the Kenyan girls with a workshop at which topics such as female empowerment, female health, HIV Aids awareness, assertiveness training, study skills, and advice on how to deal with future relationships are offered. In Tanzania the standard of education is lower so we also provide annual tutorials in all academic subjects. The girls at the top of the District exam result lists over the past few years are all CHES girls.

CHES grads in both Tanzania and Kenya are recognised in their local communities as being noticeably more poised, self-assured, and confident than most of their peers. Their Motto in Tanzania is "Tuna Sauti" which is Swahili for "We have a Voice".

CHES girls, in both countries, also bond with each other and have sustainable support and networking experiences both during and long after they leave school.

As the people most directly able to answer the questions you have posed are the girls themselves, we have included, a photo of a list of items brainstormed by our Tanzanian girls in answer to the question, "What is the advantage of being a CHES girl?" Note the one, "We have a Sponsor, someone cares".

Thank you so much for being a sponsor, the impact you are having is very great and will never be forgotten by the recipients.

This article appeared in the Inspire Well. Spread Good Blog thanks to a CHES Sponsor, Kenneth Friesen
<https://blog.wehl.com/spread-good-project-2-supporting-wellness-and-education-girls-in-kenya/>



Smiles!



Do you ever wonder if your sponsorship has made a difference in the life of the girl or what happened to her after she is finished high school? It is not about keeping them from getting married off by their parents at an early age for a cow, two goats, or such other item. CHES' belief is that we don't give a "hand out" but rather a "hand up" to a much better life.

Many years after completing their sponsorship girls regularly return to the office in Katesh to update CHES as to what is happening in their lives and how their lives have been changed as a result of CHES. Their appreciation of what they were given through your support of their education is so evident.

During my recent visit I met many former students who I had not met on previous visits as they no longer live in the area. Their stories filled me with real joy; after 30+ years CHES is still doing things right!

Rebecca graduated in 2007. She is now living near Kilimanjaro airport, teaches primary school, and is married with two children. They are building their own house near the school even though they currently live in a teacherage. They have a house girl who looks after the children. Not only has her life changed but also she is providing employment for others. Life for her family is very different from what she had experienced as a child!

by Joy Ruffeski

Tomatoes for Tanzania

Once again, Sara Williams' friend Willie grew over a thousand tomato plants (about 30 heirloom varieties) and Sara had her Tomatoes for Tanzania sale last April. The event in Saskatoon raised over \$4,000 for CHES! Willie also gave about 200 plants to the local food bank garden. A big thank you to Willie!

If you live in Saskatchewan, look for news in the spring about the 2020 sale!

Lorrie Williams - 2019 New Westminster's Citizen of the Year

Lorrie Williams founded CHES in 1985 after serving as a teacher in Kenya and was struck by how hungry the female students were to learn. She continues to serve on the CHES Canada board.

Congratulations to Lorrie Williams, New Westminster's 2019 Citizen of the Year. Lorrie has contributed a great deal to the city and is certainly a most deserving citizen to receive this award.

Lorrie volunteers once a week at the Royal Columbian Hospital Auxiliary Thrift Store and at Aunt Leah's Place. She is a member of the Royal City Rotary, a director of the Sapperton Pensioners Association, and a supporter of the Lookout Housing and Health Society. Lorrie helps the Royal City Humane Society, and every December, she helps at an animal shelter in Guatemala with two fellow New Westminster residents. As if this isn't enough to fill her days, Lorrie continues to give her time and effort to CHES.

Lorrie served on the New Westminster City Council for 16 years. As a councillor, she was instrumental in having a new animal shelter constructed and in having the Wait for Me Daddy war memorial erected in Hyack Square. She also took the lead in restorative justice initiatives in New Westminster as well as in other programs in the city.

Lorrie loves New Westminster and is very proud to be a New West citizen.



Celebrate International Women's Day, March 8th, in New Westminster

CHES invites you to celebrate International Women's Day on Sunday, March 8, at the Sapperton Pensioners Hall, 318 Keary Street, New Westminster. The event is from 5 to 8 p.m. with dinner scheduled for 6 p.m. The hall is very close to the Royal Columbian Hospital and easily accessible from the Sapperton Skytrain Station. There will be a delicious catered meal of pasta, salad, and bread. Entertainment will be provided by the Quayside Singers and a very special guest, John Lipi Lanyasunya, Kenya's High Commissioner to Canada, will join us. A vegetarian meal option is available and there will be a cash bar. Coffee, tea, and dessert will be provided.

Education for girls is an important way to improve the lives of females and their families. We can certainly celebrate the role that CHES has played in educating girls in Kenya and Tanzania for over 30 years.

International Women's Day is an event celebrated in many countries as a national holiday. The United Nations theme for IWD 2020 is "I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights". IWD is a one-day event held on March 8th but the theme is celebrated for the whole year. Events are held around the world to recognize the progress made towards equal rights, economic power, and political advancements for women and girls. While the picture is not perfect for women in Canada or Kenya or Tanzania, there has been progress and the struggle continues.

At the CHES' IWD event there will be a Silent Auction of amazing articles, as well as door prizes, and raffle draws. Tickets are just \$20 and are available by calling the CHES office (778-565-2861) and leaving a message; pre-ordering your ticket would be helpful so we know how many people to expect.

NOTE: This is a fundraiser for CHES and all donations will be gratefully accepted.

