

# Canadian Harambee Education Society

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

Fall 2021 Newsletter #74



## **Important Reminder: CHES AGM**

The CHES AGM will be held online via Zoom again this year to enable sponsors worldwide to join the meeting.

Date: **November 20 at 2 p.m. PST.** (ammended date)

Please plan on attending; access is available both by internet and phone no matter where you are located worldwide.

A link for the AGM and materials for the meeting will be sent out approximately a week prior to the AGM so please watch for and bookmark the email link or copy the phone number so you may attend.

## The Tomato Plant Sale – Definitely a Busy Day!

The volunteer crew arrived at 8 a.m. for coffee and rhubarb muffins (fresh from Willie’s yard). We set up tables and benches, signed them all with the type of tomatoes and the varieties within which type, and hauled everything that had been stored in the garage onto the tables. Then the gate signage as to the entrance, exits, please wear masks & social distance, and so forth were put up.



Time for another quick coffee and then David Miller manned the gates with a list of who was slotted into which time slot and a bottle of hand sanitizer. Busy, busy, busy, until noon. We were constantly restocking tables and David Meyer (from Carrot River) ran the tractor and trailer with additional loads from the greenhouse.

Lunch from noon to 1 p.m. - chilli, homemade bread, and bean salad. David Meyer brought a tomato ice cream cake for Willie and it was sort like a birthday party for dessert. Then, another mad rush until about 2:30 p.m. when we stopped for a coffee and coffee cake break. The last folks came at 3:30 p.m.

We loaded the “good” (saleable) tomato plants into my car as well as David and Robert’s car for a “city sale” in the town. The ones that were good but looked a little worse for wear we put back in the garage until Tuesday when they were given to the “Open Door Society” (recent immigrants) community garden and the CHEP (Food Bank) community garden. Finally, the volunteers put away all of the benches and tables and called it DONE at about 6 p.m.



Monies earned from this year’s sale was just under \$4,800. Special thanks go to Willie for growing the tomatoes and the team of volunteers on sale day for supporting CHES students with this endeavour.

by Sara Williams



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

## Reconnecting with Tanzania

A lot has changed since 1969 when we first met Chris and Catriona Harker, when Robb and Chris were on CIDA teaching contracts at Mkwawa High School in up-country Iringa, Tanzania. At that time, a letter took two weeks to get to Canada, and the reply took another two weeks to get back. Now communication is almost instantaneous and although we are no longer neighbours, we have managed to get together with Chris and Catriona almost every year somewhere in the world since 1972. When we left Tanzania in 1972, we said a tearful goodbye to Delphina, the woman who had helped raise our daughter for three years, never expecting to see her again, and in fact it was to be 24 years before we did!

In 1996 we returned to Tanzania with our son and two friends to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest free-standing mountain in the world. We decided after the climb that a nostalgia trip to Iringa was in order. On arrival in this town, now much larger than 24 years ago, we made our way on foot to the high school, and on the way, encountered a very well-dressed older gentleman whom we greeted in the Tanzanian way in Kiswahili with the respectful “Shikamoo.” He asked why we had greeted him in this way, as most tourists would have said “Jambo” if they had bothered to say anything at all. We stopped to talk and learned he had a PhD from the University of Alberta in Edmonton! He invited us all for dinner and wouldn’t take no for an answer, so later that day we found ourselves being treated to a very fine meal, served buffet-style. We ate at TV tables while watching a video of Daktari, a 1960s American TV series about an animal orphanage in East Africa.

Not only that, his daughter had tracked down and invited to their home the woman who used to care for our daughter. It was a tearful reunion with Delphina. She was invited to join us at dinner but felt too shy to stay. However, when we left Iringa by bus a couple of days later, there she was at the bus stand with a shopping bag of food for our journey – two roast chickens, boiled eggs and bottled water!

Somehow, after this trip in 1996, we just couldn’t seem to stay away from Africa, and over the next years we were back visiting and/or working almost every year, with our daughter managing the trip back to reconnect with Delphina in 1998.

We were able to help with school fees for Delphina’s grandchildren and with other expenses, such as building a security wall around her property. Sadly, she died after a massive stroke shortly after our last visit to her in 2005, but we kept in touch with some of her children for a few years after that.

When we learned about CHES in 2000, we knew this was the way to help, as we knew firsthand how much a little financial support meant to a struggling family. Now we have had several CHES “daughters,” most of whom we have been able to meet. We have also served as agents in Kenya and have helped out with workshops and tutorials in Tanzania. In Canada, we and the Harkers and many other CHES supporters do our best to get others interested in this very worthwhile educational charity.

Harambee! Let’s pull together!

by Jeanette & Robb Taylor



## Introducing Two of Our New Board Members

I am *Lorrie Sarah Okunyanyi*. I am a CHES graduate who was sponsored by Lorrie Williams at St. Anne's Musoli Girls High School in Kenya. I am the third born of a family of three brothers and two sisters.

My father, Laban Anjere, is one of the first boys who were sponsored by CHES before the organization started focusing on girls only. Unfortunately, his parents could not afford to pay for his post-secondary education. He went on to start farming. Subsistence farming has been my parents' sole source of income providing just the basic needs: food, shelter, and clothing to the six kids, not enough to educate all of us as public high school education is not free in Kenya. CHES came into my life at the time when my parents were out of options. They had spent the little savings they had on my older brother, who was in college at the time.

If you are familiar with Kenyan culture, you are aware that girls take care of most of, if not all, the house chores. What does this mean for a girl? She has almost no time to concentrate on schoolwork. This is where boarding school has a very positive effect. While in boarding school, she is likely to excel in examinations and qualify for post-secondary education.

After I completed high school in 2014, I got a two-year scholarship at Dorset College in Vancouver through the help of Lorrie Williams. I pursued my Diploma in Business Administration and later transferred to University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) to study Accounting. I recently graduated from UNBC with Bachelor of Commerce--Accounting major.

While Kenya is a huge part of who I am, I plan to work and stay in Canada. The past six years have been interesting, different, a bit challenging as any change would be but ultimately an incredible experience so far.

I'm currently a board member of CHES Canada, extending a helping hand where possible as CHES is very dear to my heart. I would not be where I am without the amazing, kind-hearted CHES family. I am eternally grateful.

Asante sana.

by Lorrie Sarah Okunyanyi

---

**H**i, my name is *Dwight Dracek*. I am excited about the prospect of being able to help out on the CHES board. I first saw the good work CHES was doing when I visited Katesh in 2014 on a safari trip with Robb and Jeanette Taylor. The students had a safe place to stay and study with staff and volunteers that really wanted to make the girls' lives better. I liked that pretty much all the money that is donated makes it to the people (girls). So many charities now take so much of the money raised to keep their organization running instead of getting it to the people who need it.

I have been involved with both corporate and volunteer boards for more than 20 years. I am an engineer and an entrepreneur and I have spent my career working in the energy industry in Alberta, BC and Saskatchewan for more than 35 years. I am rebalancing my work life and I now have more time to help with worthwhile causes like CHES.

I am excited to help with the CHES board in any way I can.

by Dwight Dracek



## What's Our Number

**C**HES is currently supporting 561 girls and young women in two distant countries. In order to do this, we have compounds in both Kenya and Tanzania

In Kenya this contains an office, a meeting area, accommodation for visiting agents, and a safe house that is, in essence, a mini apartment.

In Tanzania the compound is larger. Besides our office and agent accommodation, it contains dormitory facilities for over 100 students, a wash block, a dining/study hall with an attached kitchen, a small house for the matron and her family, several small storage sheds, four reservoirs and a shamba containing fruit trees and vegetables.

In Canada, we have a small office in Surrey, generously donated to us by the Surrey Teacher's Association.

We attempt to run CHES as economically as possible; the more we save on running our operation, the more girls we can support.

I don't think we do too badly. A recent report from Canada Revenue Agency confirmed that we spend 92.6% of our revenue on our programs. "Management/Administration/Fund Raising" consumes 7.4% of our income with a mere 2.2% of that being spent on salaries.

by Chris Harker



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

## CHES' Use of Boarding Schools vs Day Schools

**W**hy does CHES send all our girls in Kenya to boarding schools rather than having them live at home and attend the nearest day school where fees are significantly less? We could send double the number of girls to secondary schools if we just used day schools and had the girls live at home and walk to school each day.

There are many reasons including the quality of schools as the educational success of those attending boarding school is much higher than that of day schools. However, one of the main reasons was very evident this year when schools in Kenya were closed for 10 months due to COVID. Girls in a family are responsible for washing clothes, collecting firewood, working on the shamba, and looking after younger siblings. Rape is very common, especially in rural settings when girls are outside their own dwelling.

Sadly, while the girls were living at home rather than in the secure environment of a boarding school, five girls became pregnant. Fortunately, in Kenya if a girl is pregnant, after the birth of the child, the girl can continue her studies if she wishes. Four of the five girls chose to do so but their grades were severely impacted as they did miss several months of school when classes recommenced.

In Tanzania there are very few secondary schools in the Hanang District that have boarding facilities. CHES has over 100 girls living in the Sara Williams Hostel and they attend six schools in the immediate area. Katesh Secondary and Hanang Day are close enough for the girls to walk in groups safely and transportation to the other four schools is provided.

In Tanzania, until recently, pregnant or married students were permanently banned from attending state secondary schools. Thanks to intervention by the World Bank in 2020 and the full support of the new president, the situation will be changed to permit a girl who becomes pregnant to go back to school after the birth of the child. The project will enable girls to attend alternative education centres to sit their exams and later return to state schools. If this has any impact on CHES girls in Tanzania remains to be seen.

## Notice to CHES Sponsors

**I**f you have not yet paid for your girl's fee for 2021, we would appreciate receiving it.

Sponsors will be receiving a printed invoice reminding them that the fee continues to be \$600 for the 2022 school year. Thank you to those who have already sent in your \$600 for the coming year.

We appreciate receiving it by early December 2021 so we have sufficient funds to send to Africa at the beginning of the school year in Tanzania. We recognize that the school year for 2022 in Kenya will not start until March but if you wish to receive a tax receipt for 2021 you will need to send in the funds before the end of 2021.

A reminder that funds can be sent by cheque or e-transfer. Please phone our office to receive information as to how to do a bank transfer of funds directly from your bank account into the CHES bank account.

If making donations by credit card through [CanadaHelps.org](https://CanadaHelps.org) they do charge a fee of 4.2% from the CHES portion of donations so we ask that you add an additional \$30 to cover this service charge.

American sponsors may send their donations to the Humanist Society, 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.

Additional donations are always appreciated and are income tax receiptable as well.



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

## Red Pencils

When I think of Heather, I think of pencils. Red pencils. This may sound odd to some but anyone knowing her would realize how deeply committed she was to the education of young people and how she was always thinking of yet another creative thing she could do for those in her care at Carlin Elementary in the Shuswap School District.

In 2001, I began my first overseas volunteer work, that time for a year, with the Canadian Harambee Education Society as a field officer in Kakamega, Kenya, East Africa. Our plane from Amsterdam actually touched down onto the tarmac in Nairobi in the early morning of September 11, 2001, a day which would change all our lives forever and thereafter be referred to as “9/11”. My seat mate and I sat huddled and numb in front of a tv after landing at the third and last airport, watching the now too-familiar images of the crumbling twin towers as we waited for a taxi to take us onto the last leg of our 39-hour marathon trip from Vancouver to Kakamega in the Western Province of Kenya. We broke the news to the Canadians we were replacing. Without tv, internet, and with only erratic radio reception, they were unaware of the tragedy.

Being a retired teacher myself, I thought I would visit Heather’s Kindergarten class before flying off to East Africa and we spent a delightful hour talking about a day in school in Africa, explaining how life was the same but quite different there. The children wanted to try carrying a partially-filled pail of water on their heads, just as Kenyan youngsters did. Before I left, Heather said, “Here, take these,” and thrust into my hand a package of thick red pencils. “We use these when the children are just beginning to print.” I packed them into one of my suitcases, having no idea where or how I would use them because I was to be only concerned with choosing young women for sponsorship to secondary schools.

Every day in-country, as the first morning light was breaking over the banana tree outside my bedroom window in CHES House, I’d spy that bundle of fat, shiny red pencils lying in the corner of the drawer, begging to be released.

When my daughter Nila came to visit in July, 2002, we were fortunate enough to be invited to an elementary school where a young Canadian woman had been volunteering. We found out that the senior students were preparing to go to the capital city, Nairobi, to perform some of their traditional dances, dances which had won them first place at the big music festival several weeks previously. The clothing they were to wear for the performances had been hand-washed and was hanging everywhere on the wire fences along the walkways between the school buildings; during that day the children had been sent home to “find money”, returning with a few shillings to contribute to their field trip expenses.



We returned later in the week and spent part of the morning in a Grade 1 class. The children sang and danced a traditional Luhya song of welcome and those red pencils were presented to their teacher, Brenda, who proceeded to explain their origin to her young charges.

Well, no one could have known the impact that each of those pencils had on those boys and girls! They printed, then drew pictures which I would carry back to Canada along with photographs of the children so that Heather’s students, now in Grade 1, could enjoy seeing that little bit of Canada in a Kenyan primary classroom. Red for Canada, red for the maple leaf on the small flags we gave them.

That afternoon all winning traditional dances were performed in our honour. We were also expected to get up and dance while the senior students drummed. When Brenda saw my look of shock, she



whispered, "Don't worry, Grandmother. I will help you!" We were a source of entertainment, without a doubt, but we gamely rose to the occasion. Kenyans love speeches, so we also had to say a few words while the children giggled, looked politely away and shyly leaning into a friend's shoulder in the squirming crowd of excited spectators.



A short while after I'd returned to my home in Salmon Arm, Heather told me that her cancer had returned. She was very open about how she was feeling and how ill she was. With great courage she expressed to me what was happening and what she hoped to do about it. In the following week, when she'd had enough, she left. Still in charge, still doing things her way. Heather's husband and daughters placed the photos I

brought to them, along with my Red Pencils story, into their Book of Memories.

Helen Keller said, "To keep our faces toward change and behave like free spirits in the presence of fate is strength undefeatable."

So, when I think of Heather, I smile. I smile for her and her quiet courage. And I smile when I think of those little faces, their blue uniforms and their own smiles of delight and determination as their tiny hands encircled those fat new pencils.

A small thing? Perhaps . . . .

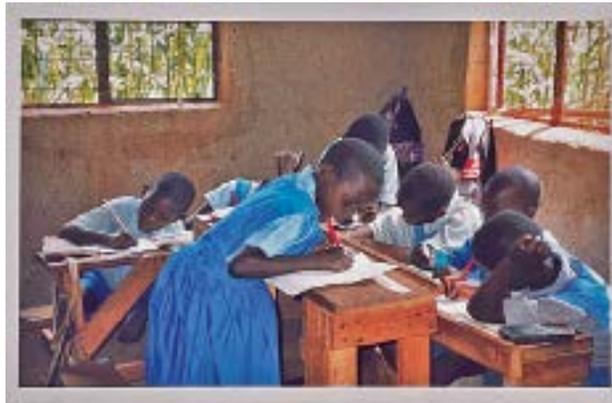
But Mother Teresa expressed it best,

"We can do not great things - only small things with great love."

With red pencils, then? Yes, Red Pencils.

by Nancy Carson

(Note: Nancy Carson was a CHES agent three times, beginning in 2001 (when she went for a full year).



## Think About Becoming a CHES Agent in Kenya!

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 the website ([www.canadianharambee.ca](http://www.canadianharambee.ca)) for past newsletters for agent information and exciting accounts of agents' past experiences. For further information, contact [ches@canadianharambee.ca](mailto:ches@canadianharambee.ca) or (778) 565-5261.



## CHES Annual Appeal

In late November we email our ANNUAL APPEAL to all CHES supporters inviting them to help us cover numerous “extra” expenses we incur annually. These include student workshops, health needs (hearing aids, glasses, medical emergencies), salaries for our few employees overseas, office supplies and expenses, and necessary professional costs (audits, bookkeeping, insurance). Note the appeal does NOT contact current sponsors.

However, did you know that last year 36% of CHES sponsors gave “a little bit more” than the basic \$600 sponsorship fee? We hope that this percentage is greater this year as we continue to provide supplies for the COVID protection of the girls and our costs for doing so have increased.

## Student Letters

It is always a delight for sponsors to receive letters from their girl. In order to give students practice in different forms of writing, CHES girls in Tanzania are given topics as to what information they are expected to include in their letters. The information varies with each form level and each student must write it herself and to the best of her English ability. The girls also are to add other information as they wish.

Here are some interesting “personal” excerpts from recent letters to sponsors:

*My math’s teacher is Mr. Mwashu. He is very competent teacher. He used to provide us with a lot of exercise and sometimes home packages. That is why I love maths. He told us to study hard since he was the only boy sponsored by CHES in Tanzania.*

*We have got a new headmaster in our school. He is called Idrisa Mbwsambo. The former headmaster has shifted to another school. The new headmaster is very cool and humble. He has introduced new learning strategies. We are now given home assignments even especially for Science subjects in which many students perform poorly.*

*I am writing to let you know that I mostly like listening to music while cooking. During weekend when I was at my grandmother’s home I was asked to prepare lunch. As my habit I got into the kitchen and started listening to a loud music, then I started preparing food. It was rice and beans. I started dancing when I was waiting for the rice to be ready. I danced until I forgot that I was cooking. The food started to burn. My grandmother got a smell and came in the kitchen. She found me dancing, she stopped the music, and shouted at me. I was so afraid and turned off the burner and I removed the saucepan from fire place. Since that day I decided to do one thing at a time.*

*In the environment of our school there are monkeys. These animals are brown in colour and have a long tail. Monkeys are many in the rainy season because people cultivate crops and monkeys eat crops and farmers get less. Also, sometimes monkeys come and enter in the kitchen of our school and drink water. In the afternoon when we are getting lunch, monkeys come to the places where we ate our food and started to eat the remained food.*

*My school farm was about four hectares. Many years ago school farms were owned by our teachers but since last year up to this year all farms were returned back under school ownership. In these hectares we planted maize, beans, and sunflowers. After harvesting all crops most of them were sold as to increase apparatus in our laboratory for doing practicals in physics, chemistry, and biology. I am so glad that our teachers improved our laboratories for better performance because for few years ago most of students failed science subjects due to absence of enough apparatus.*

*I would like to share with you my happiness on my village changes. For many years my village has a shortage of water supply, no electricity, and poor roads. Just after last year’s general election our council have new district representative in the parliament who for a short time he makes my village a new home. This man promised before that very soon after election will change our village. He has fulfilled his promises in almost six months after being put into power. So we enjoy having enough water and light at my village that many houses have electricity lights for many uses including helping students in their studies.*



*I would like to tell you that now we have a laboratory in our school which is physics laboratory. This improve our academic performance because we learn practically. Also, on January 2021 four teachers were employed at our school, three males and one female and they teach physics, basic mathematics and chemistry. I thank God because our problem was lack of science teachers and now we have enough science teachers.*

*I would like to tell you about changes in our country, Tanzania. In the past women were not given a chance of participating in political issues. Even sometimes girls were not allowed to get education from school. Also, they were kept at home taking care of their families and later they got married without getting a chance of education. In my country nowadays there are positive changes that we have 59 ministers in the cabinet and government ministries. Things have changed - both women and men have equal chance of participating in any social, economic, and political activities. When you enter in an office you don't miss to see a woman working within. All these are changes that have occurred in my country. I feel so proud that we have a female president who is called Samia Suluhu. She is representing a higher political position.*

## **Investment Trust Fund**

In the past few years several of our long term sponsors have passed away and left legacies in their will for CHES. An investment trust fund has been established with these monies to ensure that CHES will continue to be able to provide scholarships to needy intelligent girls in Kenya and Tanzania should unforeseen events take place and sponsors can no longer support education in Africa. If you have not left a donation to CHES in your will, please think of doing so. Your money will be well used and certainly appreciated by the recipients of CHES scholarships.

### **AN EASY WAY TO HELP SPONSOR MORE CHES STUDENTS**

If you receive this newsletter by regular mail, you can help sponsor two additional students just by sending us your email so future newsletters can be send to you in PDF format that way.

It costs us over \$3 for each newsletter to be printed and mailed and with the number of individuals who have not shared their emails with us, that equates to over \$1200 in savings. If we did not have to print and mail your newsletter three times a year, two additional girls in Africa could attend secondary school through CHES.

We do not share your email with any person, other organization, and no one can see your email address when we send out the newsletter. We respect your privacy and hold all information confidentially.

Will you please help to sponsor two more students and it won't cost you a penny? Just send an email to [ches@canadianharambee.ca](mailto:ches@canadianharambee.ca) with your name and email address and then you can receive newsletters in a timely manner rather than having to wait at least a month to receive them.

Thank you for your anticipated help with this.

