

Canadian Harambee Education Society

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

Spring 2022 Newsletter #76



Hostel Completed!

In last newsletter we informed readers of the funding we had received that was to enable us to complete the girl's hostel at Mwahu Secondary School. The project had been started in 2019 when 26 students from Stelly's Secondary in Central Saanich on Vancouver Island spent an industrious spring break that took construction from foundation to "walls up and roof on." Sadly, with no further funding being available, the structure remained unfinished for nearly three years.

In December 2021, our CHES treasurer in Katesh, Naomi Saulo, was delighted to learn that funds were available to complete the dorm. She wasted no time in arranging and coordinating a team that got to work in early January.



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They plastered and painted the walls inside and out. The floor was finished, a ceiling was installed, and windows were fitted. There is no water at the school – it all has to be brought in with a tanker truck – so a pit latrine was built nearby. Within the hostel, shower stalls are in place but the girls will wash using a litre or two of water from a bucket. On the final day, the name was painted over the main entrance: STELLY'S HOSTEL.

The January 2022 newsletter invited CHES supporters to buy a bed for a Mwashu girl. Naomi determined that we needed 144 beds at \$92 a bed. You were wonderfully generous. Believe it or not, we were slightly over-subscribed. With the extra funds, we have been able to purchase mosquito nets and simple lockers or chests for all the girls. Many, many thanks to everyone who supported this project!

On April 7, with parents and local officials there to mark the occasion, the girls collected their belongings from the atrocious and toxic old dorm and, with smiles of delight on every face, moved into their new, clean, spacious accommodation.

by Chris Harker



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This letter was written by one of the students, on behalf of all the girls who will be living at the new Stelly's Hostel while they attend Mwashu Secondary School. It clearly expresses their gratitude to all those involved in this project.

MWASHU SECONDARY SCHOOL
P.O. BOX 361
WATEH - MANYARA
MANYARA - TANZANIA
30 APRIL 2022.

STELLY'S SCHOOL
CANADIAN HARAMBE SOCIETY (CHES)

Dear Sir / Madam

RE: GIVING THANKS FOR CONSTRUCTING US A HOSTEL.

Please, the head of the letter above is highly concerned. We as students (girls) from Mwashu Secondary School Wateh - Manyara Tanzania, we like to give our sincere thanks to Stelly's School and Canadian Harambe Society (CHES) for constructing us a nice Hostel. Indeed the completion of this Hostel is a solution of multiple challenges of accommodation that has been facing us for a long period of time.

This is simply because previously we were living in an old Hostel with high rate of congestion in which sometimes we used sleep on the floor and it very dangerous for our health. The hostel is going to remove the disturbance as every one of us will be sleeping on her own bed which is nice and comfort and good for our health. Also we hope that even our academic performance will increase as we will get a time to settle and study comfortably.

The importance of this New Hostel is that those girls who could not get a chance in the old Hostel due to lack of chance are going to benefit hence leads to their security. Previously those girls were in danger of being invaded by the gangs when they go to school from evening preparation and on their way when they return to their rented rooms at the small towns.

For those reasons we say "thank you all" for your empathy, your time and your financial support which resulted to the construction of the Hostel. May the Almighty God bless you and protect you all. Amen

Yours faithfully
MARY JACOB MNYAWI
A student from Mwashu Secondary School on behalf of the girls



Chris McDonald was the Stelly's teacher in charge of the student group that initiated the work on the Mwahu dorm. When informed of the dorm's successful completion, he replied:

"It's great to see the hostel completed! Despite the challenges of Covid-19 over the past couple of years, Mwahu has always been in my thoughts and the thoughts of my students who were able to participate in its construction. The experience they had in Tanzania (and at Mwahu on particular) will stay with them for the rest of their lives. We wish all the best to your school and your new hostel".

Thank you, RR Smith Foundation



The R.R. Smith Memorial Fund Foundation is a charity established by the BC Retired Teachers' Association. Its purpose is to advance public education in British Columbia and in developing countries by providing funding to support innovative projects that advance public education.

Robert Reid Smith was a founding member of the BCTF and its president from 1963 to 1965. He died in 1969.

At the beginning of each term, each CHES student is provided with a carry-bag of school supplies, which includes notebooks, paper, pens, pencils, compasses and, nowadays, masks. As we have over 500 girls, this involves a substantial outlay.



For many years the RR Smith Foundation has underwritten a substantial portion of these costs in both Kenya and Tanzania.

CHES greatly appreciates this and thanks the RR Smith Board for their continuing support and generosity.

Running for Mayor!



Jael Omunyang'oli - A former CHES Student is running for the mayor's position in Kakamaga, Kenya. CHES wishes her the best of success with her campaign. We are certain all CHES supporters and contributors hope she is successful and is elected in the coming election in August!



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My First Day with Students

Today, March 2, is the first day that students will be bringing their final marks and letters for their sponsor for this past shortened school year. You would think they would be happy and excited to go home but they really weren't. They now go home to spend quite a few weeks without the comforts of school, which are a clean warm bed and food.

They were very hard on themselves with their marks. One girl told me she belonged to a drama club at her school and they had entered a competition against some other schools. She was not happy with her performance because she felt she should have done better. Then she told me she placed first in the contest! These girls are so driven and focused it's astounding to see. They want to be engineers, doctors, lawyers, writers, nurses, and teachers. They just want a better life and to be able to be the one who takes care of their family.



The girls also have to bring in letters to send to their sponsors. Something that seems to be very high on their wish list is their hope for their sponsor to write to them. The ones I spoke to directly had not ever received a response. They want to know about your family structure, what snow is like, what your favourite food is, what job you have, and whether we have crocodiles that bite you when we go swimming. And they like pictures too. They are so curious. So if you do sponsor a CHES girl, I encourage you to write to them.

Sponsors are asked to write to their student at the address given on the letter sent to them by their student. However, if you don't have an address, please mail your letter to the CHES House in Tanzania or Kenya:

CHES House
Box 69
Katesh, Manyara
Tanzania

CHES House
P.O. Box 2036-50100
Kakamega – Mumias RD (Joyland)
Kenya

by Becky Finley

(Becky Finley, a first-time volunteer in Kakamega, Kenya, has had a very busy experience since she arrived on January 24, 2022. She and office manager Rebecca visited all the schools CHES students attend in the district as well as attending a lengthy Board meeting composed mostly of former CHES alumni.)



In April, Becky, Rebecca, and former CHES grads screened about 220 hopeful Form 1 applicants for CHES scholarships in Kenya. Christabel Lutomia is one of the former CHES girls who assisted with the interviews; her long-term goal is to become a police officer.



Repeat Performance of “Tomatoes for Tanzania”

I know last year was supposed to be our “last” Tomatoes for Tanzania sale. But Willie is not a man about to be stopped from doing what he loves best.

He has seeded and has almost done the first transplant. The first greenhouse is full. And there are still more to come.

Details will follow, but those of you in Saskatchewan please circle your calendar for May 14th (May 21st if the weather is bad). And pass the word to your family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, and post person.

If you have any pots of 6 inches or greater or trays, drop-off at the gate would be greatly appreciated of Sara William’s home in Grasswood, Saskatchewan.

by Sara Williams (and Willie Axelson)



CHES Graduates – Outstanding Achievements

Some sponsors continue to communicate with their “daughters” after they have graduated from high school as CHES students. We love to hear stories about what your former student is doing if you’ve kept in touch with her. Please send us such news so we can share it with others; your sponsorship truly changes lives!

Jael Omunyang’oli



Jael Omunyang’oli has won a scholarship to study in Germany at the Freidrich Norman Foundation Training Institute in the 2022 calendar year after coming second in the African Women Empowerment Program 2021 cohort.

Information supplied by her former sponsor, Nancy Carson

Cynthia Akula Olesi

Cynthia was a CHES graduate of Bunyore Girls High School in Kenya. She was determined to advance her education and rise above poverty. A year after leaving high school she was accepted at the University of Eastern Africa and found three sponsors who financed her studies to become a graduate nurse. While at university she met her husband Albert, a pastor, and they have two daughters of their own and one adopted son.

However, that wasn’t enough for Cynthia as she desperately wanted to go to the USA. An agency in Nairobi sponsored her for a job in a Veterans’ Home in Hot Springs, South Dakota. She and her family took up residence there 2 ½ years ago. No sooner had she got settled than she enrolled online for a Masters Program at Grand Canyon University. This past summer she graduated and is paying back big time for what CHES did for her by sponsoring 4 children in high school and one in college back home in Kenya. What an amazing young woman!



by Celia Dodds

Agness Odemary

Agness Odemary grew up in Babati but when her dad was hospitalised with a mental illness, her mum moved to Katesh. The home at the time was a mud walled, thatched roofed house, one of several structures within a small, spotless compound surrounded by thornbushes. In 1996, her mum being a single parent with several children, Agness was chosen to be a CHES girl. In 1999 she graduated from Form IV from Endasak Secondary School.

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In the early 2000s, the CHES office earned a small income by offering scribing and copying services. It also sold stationary items to the public. Agness, due in part to her willingness to develop new skills but also because of her friendly, outgoing personality, was hired to help our office manager. Shortly thereafter the manager was offered a teaching job and Agness became our boss-lady.



She ran the office very successfully and profitably for several years and then moved on in 2006 to take a course in computers and information technology at the University of Dar es Salaam.

In 2001, she had met Raymaker, a young entrepreneur just starting out in the cell phone business – a business that was in the process at that time, of really taking off in Tanzania. Their relationship blossomed and they married in 2008.

Agness gave up her job with CHES and moved to Dar es Salaam. Raymaker has done well in the IT industry. But Agness has not let the grass grow under her feet. She has had and is in the process of bringing up three delightful children and somehow found the energy to open a small corner grocery in the suburbs of Dar. More recently, she has made another change as her “duka” now sells stationary and technology supplies and offers

internet café services.

Her father’s health improved to the point that he was able to move back home. Five years ago Agness and Raymaker built a new home for her parents. Her father (now 86) and mother live there now.

About a year ago, Agness emailed us to tell us that she wanted to sponsor a CHES girl. We congratulate and thank her for being in a position to “give – back” like this and her willingness to do so. She is our first Tanzanian grad to become a sponsor. Hopefully not our last.

Asante sana Agness.

by Chris Harker



Wonderful Memories

Everlynnne, Entrepreneur Extraordinaire

CHES directors with experience in Kenya were recently encouraged to contribute a short article for the upcoming newsletter. As agent and accompanying spouse, Robb and I had so many good memories of our time in Kakamega over 20 years ago, but one special one came to the forefront.

In 2000, parents or guardians of CHES-sponsored girls were to contribute 15% of the school fees – about CDN\$75 – per year. For some this was an insurmountable expense, but without this payment, their girl would be “chased” from school. Thus one day a senior CHES student, Everlynnne Akhonya, came to our door very upset because her younger sister had been chased from school. The family only had enough money for Everlynnne’s 15%. What to do? After discussion with Everlynnne, it was established she knew how to cook chapatis (the unleavened bread popular in Kenya). We gave her enough seed money to buy flour, salt, and fat and sent her off to make an order of chapatis for us, for which we would pay her the going rate. A few days later, she appeared with our order. The chapatis were delicious!

Soon word got around the Canadian community, starting with the other CHES agent, Alinda Ware and her accompanying husband, John Bowbrick. When this was followed almost immediately by another Canadian



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agency, the chapati orders started pouring in. We spent some time explaining to Everlynne how to keep simple books so she could track her profits, saving some for the fees and some for more supplies. With the confidence of minor success, Everlynne expanded her business and started selling chapatis first at the Kakamega hospital to families responsible for feeding their sick relatives and then to customers at the produce market. Next she decided to add a flask of milk tea for thirsty customers. Unfortunately, she was reported by a jealous competitor as she didn't have a business licence. However, by this time she had made enough profit to pay her sister's fees and could continue just with her original customers – a happy ending to the story. It's amazing what a gentle hand-up instead of a hand-out can accomplish!

by Jeanette Taylor (director)

Memorable Moments of Living in Kenya

I first went to Kenya in December 1983 to visit my friend Lorrie Williams at the school in Khumusalaba near Kisumu. Lorrie's mother and I had such a fabulous visit that I decided to return in January 1984 to teach at Lorrie's school, Ekambuli.

Living and working in Kenya was a magical time for me. I was so excited the first time we went from the school to the city of Kisumu. Lorrie drove, and I sat in the back of the truck with two students. It was exciting travelling on the road, which consisted of dirt and stones in a large arc that tapered into large ditches at each side. Keeping to the safe and high part of the road was a lesson in survival.

We were shopping for supplies for the school and also things we couldn't get in the village market: a case of wine for when the going got tough, and for what we called the 3 B's – brown bread, butter, and one beer at the hotel pool as a reward. We also included a trip to The British Counsel for library books and a taste of Western culture. The students we brought then were left to their own devices, except for the ones guarding the truck. Then yes, finally to the swimming pool to have our one beer (all we could afford) and to see other expats. I was so used to seeing only Africans that seeing a foreigner felt strange.

We would come home from our shopping and share a bottle of wine or a drink of raspberry cordial. We had no ice cubes of course, but would chorus "tinkle, tinkle, tinkle" as we drank our imaginary cold drinks and laugh over the day's experiences and fantasize that Robert Redford was our mechanic for the truck. To me Kenya was always magic and memorable, and the sense of joy and freedom I felt riding in the back of the truck, feeling the sun and wind, is one of my best memories of life in Kenya.

by Maureen Polard (director)

African Violet 1

In 2003 and 2006 I worked as a CHES field agent in Kenya and I first met Violet when she came to my door in tears. She was about 14 years of age and had been orphaned at age 12 when her parents were both killed in a road accident. For the past two years she had been supported by and was living at the teacher's home.

However, the teacher was being transferred and Violet was now homeless and without school fees. Numerous girls came to my door with similar stories. At first I was quite skeptical. Violet addressed this skepticism by stating in her most determined 14-year-old voice, "I am a proud Lluya woman and I know how to work hard!" I was swayed and decided to personally help this African Violet and have never regretted it.

Let me tell you what happened to Violet Ayuma – the 14-year old Lluya woman who knew how to work hard. Nearby was an orphanage for infants, and in exchange for cleaning and caring for the babies at night, Violet was allowed to live there and attend school during the day. School fees were paid by me and my wife, Marzie.



On one occasion a wild dog attacked a child in the schoolyard. It was Violet who rushed to drive the dog away and attended to the child's serious wounds. In recognition of her actions the school sponsored Violet to attend a first aid training course, and upon completion she was assigned as the school's first aid attendant. She was the only person in a school of 500 students and staff with any medical training.

She graduated in 2006 with excellent marks and wanted to become a "business lady." She was given a business loan of \$20 (CDN), which she used to open a stall in the Kakamega Public Market and sold mangoes. Violet had no home so she slept in her market stall at night at great personal risk! She accumulated enough money to take the public bus to Nairobi where she purchased three bags of mangoes and became a wholesaler, selling to the other stall owners in the market.

As her business expanded, she took in an orphan girl named Abrina to help; they both slept in the stall at night. Violet also paid Abrina's school fees. She is the youngest known person in CHES to sponsor another girl in the Kenyan school system. She is giving another girl the same chance she had.

What did I learn from this? We should never underestimate those called "young" or "disadvantaged."

by Dale Leopkey

(CHES was delighted to have Dale Leopkey and his wife, Marzie, volunteer in Kakamega in 2003 and Dale on his own, known by CHES office as the Lone Agent, in 2006. His journals are filled with humorous and interesting experiences with students and the various trips Dale and Marzie took while they were there. Dale met two women named Violet in Kenya. In this newsletter he tells us about the first African Violet.)

Photo Moments from CHES' Beginnings

Katesh at the beginning of CHES setting up a program for girls in Tanzania: Lorrie Williams and Don Fraser meet for the first time with local authorities to plan the program.



In Kenya a huge assembly was held when Imbale Secondary School's Science lab, built by CHES, was officially opened and the national award winning dance team performed. Karen Kilbride, Lorrie Williams, Marie Mackay, Peg Klausner, and Beatrice Rankin were in attendance.



For Your Information

Ready to Travel Again? – Here’s a Wonderful Opportunity!

Earlier in this newsletter you read a brief account about Becky Finley’s experience as our current CHES agent in Kakamega. You, too, could have this life-changing experience! You will have a lot of fun and adventure while making a real difference in the lives of very poor but bright young Kenyan women.

We have a clean, secure home of our own 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 work times, world-famous game parks, attractions, and beaches in Kenya, Tanzania, and other nearby African countries are there to visit.

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

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

Security Donations to CHES

Some supporters of CHES like to pay for the sponsorship of their student by donating stocks/securities. Others donate securities just to support CHES activities or projects. CHES has also received security donations through bequests upon the death of an individual.

We appreciate your support in this manner. However, we ask that you please notify the CHES office by email ches@canadianharambee.ca or by phone (1-778-565-5261) that you have done so; we have no notification from our bank when securities are added to our InvestorLine account. CHES will then sell said shares and be able to issue an income tax receipt in a timely manner.

CHES AGM

The 2022 CHES AGM will, once again, be held online via Zoom. The actual date (late October/early November) will be given in our September newsletter.

We hope you’ll attend as access is available both by the internet and phone worldwide. A Zoom link and all reports will be sent out approximately a week prior to the AGM.

Social Media and CHES

Did you know that CHES has a Facebook page? We’re trying something new to reach out to those individuals who use social media and otherwise don’t know about us. As well as having information about the Canadian Harambee Education Society, we will be posting photos of CHES girls, activities, and so forth for individuals to see. Check it out, like it, and please follow it!

CHES Website

In addition to information regarding CHES’ purpose and why we support girls’ education, our website canadianharambee.ca has copies of the newsletters back until 2003 should you wish to read them. Also, as newsletters only are published 3 times a year, we have an information feed on the website with the latest photos and brief information from Kenya and Tanzania.

