

Canadian Harambee Education Society

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

Fall 2022 Newsletter #77



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 5 at 2 p.m. PST.**

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.



Wishing Lorrie Williams a Good Recovery

Lorrie Williams, founder of CHES, recently suffered a stroke and is currently in the hospital undergoing therapy to regain her mobility. Both Tanzania and Kenya CHES students sent her get well letters. Students in Tanzania also made huge posters as all the girls were together for their annual workshops; pictures of the posters are pinned on the walls of Lorrie’s hospital room along with letters from both countries. They help to cheer her up and encourage her to get better! I’m sure all CHES supporters wish Lorrie the best possible outcome for her health.



Doing Something Right

In Tanzania the Form IV graduates each year number around 80 CHES girls. Until around 2010, we were lucky if as many as 5 girls received marks high enough to carry on to Form V and VI. Graduates from this level then qualify to enter university.

It was at that point we initiated the July tutorial sessions, which entailed hiring teachers and then bringing the girls in for two weeks of intense study during the holiday period prior to their final exams. Soon after that, CHES added an English immersion component headed by executive director Joy Ruffeski. For most students, this took place before school opened in January. However, students entering Form I, who sometimes were being selected right up to the day school opened, received their English immersion during an extra week in July.

Many of the CHES girls struggled with math. From 2012 to 2016, CHES added a series of one-week workshops for math teachers presented by director Robb Taylor. The workshops helped teachers with the presentation of the math curriculum and this ultimately enhanced student skills. Presentation strategies were only part of the problem though. Just as often the lack of student success was due to the limited number of math teachers; some schools didn’t even have one.





The combination of tutorials, immersions, workshops and the fact that Tanzania is at last producing significantly more math and science teachers, has shown remarkable results.

For the last three or four years, the number of CHES graduates eligible to carry on to Form V has hovered between 30 and 35. Last year was even better. The class of 2021 sat exams in November. In May we learned that 48 of the girls had marks entitling them to advance. Most of them are to be seen in the accompanying photo.

We congratulate these young ladies who all have ambitions that include medicine, law, aviation and public service. We congratulate too those who worked so hard to help these students achieve this success.

by Chris Harker

Irene Nasimiyu

Becky Finley met CHES graduate Irene Nasimiyu while volunteering as a CHES agent in Kenya.

Irene began her dream of becoming a journalist after graduating from high school as a CHES girl in 2008. Through a generous private sponsor, she was able to continue her education to get her college journalism diploma at Multimedia University and the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication by 2013. Since the job market is so sparse for women in journalism, there is a need for Irene to continue on to get a full Bachelor's degree.

Irene is the firstborn in a family of 12 siblings and all eyes are on her. This year she has been accepted into the second year of the program at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology to perfect her skills. While trying to raise the funds to go to university, she has not stopped. With the knowledge she gained in high school she opened a duka (roadside kiosk) to sell varieties of beans. This helps to pay for food for her family.

She chose broadcast journalism because it is her passion; it is in her blood. Her dream is to be a world journalist. She wants to change and create positive impacts through her aired stories. She is so passionate about seeing community change through information. She wants to reach people at the grassroots level to tackle some of Kenya's most pressing problems.

Keeping the world informed both in print and through electronic media is one of the greatest things she keeps thinking about it. Many people at the grassroots level still cannot access information well because of so many reasons. Women and children are living vulnerable lives because of stigmatization. Kenya still has some cultural practices like female genital mutilation, early marriages, use of drugs and other substances, among others that she feels can be tackled well if these people get the right information. To keep herself in practice Irene creates some content for YouTube videos under the banner of Shalom Media Hub.

by Becky Finley



Tomatoes for Tanzania – The Man Behind it All . . .

Born in 1936, Willie Alexson grew up “on the farm” where many of his attitudes as an adult were shaped. As a youngster, he has vivid memories of, together with his sister, sneaking out to his mom’s garden, saltshaker in hand, gobbling down ripe tomato after ripe tomato. Repeated case of itchy arms for a few days due to “hives” did little to deter him. He just learned not to eat as many at one time. His mother grew two or three varieties which she started from seed.

In the late 1950s, while working for SaskPower, Willie bought his own tomato plants from a greenhouse and brought them home for his mother to look after. It wasn’t until 1964 that he had his own garden in Carrot River. He joined the local horticultural society and was hooked. “Everyone had a garden at that time.” Not having worked up enough space at his own place, he “borrowed” a patch of ground from his neighbour, Mr. Bigelow, a retired farmer. Willie bought about half a dozen plants, all the same variety, from a greenhouse in Nipawin, “It was a nice big round tomato,” probably ‘Manitoba.’ After planting them, he placed cardboard boxes about three feet high over each one with the flaps of the boxes at the top. It was still cold in northern Carrot River. Mr. Bigelow would close the flaps at night to protect the plants from frost. Willie would open them in the morning before going to work. “We had lots of tomatoes that year.”



His first attempt to grow tomatoes from seed was not successful. The tray was on a cold floor and nothing germinated. So, Willie built a 10 x 14 ft. plastic greenhouse outside. And from then on, there was no stopping him. He listened to “The Gardener” on CBC radio and never looked back.

The *Tomatoes for Tanzania* project began in 2016. The procedure has not changed. He begins seeds indoors in early March, in trays with rows, placed on heating mats. Once the plants have germinated, the lights above them are turned on during the day. When plants reach a height of about 4 inches, they are transplanted into individual four-inch pots. Another transplant into

a larger pot and they are moved outside to the heated greenhouse. In 2020, a second greenhouse was needed. The tomatoes are then transplanted at least twice more. By sale day, most plants are a few feet high and many are in flower. Each year Willie grows 1000-2000 plants of about 20-30 varieties, mostly heirloom varieties, from cherry to big beef. His own favourite? Beefsteak, of course! They make the best tomato sandwiches!!

Our first sales were held on the lawn behind Sara’s place, in Grasswood, a rural community near Saskatoon. About 100 to 150 tomato lovers gather, visit, coffee and, yes, purchase tomatoes. With the onset of COVID, it became more complex, with folks registering via email ahead of time and slotted for a particular time. The sale was moved to the driveway with masking and social distancing in place. Not as gala an occasion as previously, but still fun!

And what doesn’t sell on tomato days is donated to the *Open Door Society* for the gardens of recent immigrants or to Saskatoon’s *CHEP* to feed those who might not have access to fresh garden produce. This past year, many of his plants went to newly arrived immigrants from Ukraine. As well, from a second sale, about \$600 was donated to *Doctors without Borders* and the *Red Cross* for projects in Ukraine.



Monies earned through Willie's annual *Tomatoes for Tanzania* sale have been channeled to the CHES hostel in Katesh, Tanzania. The hostel now houses about a hundred girls with four dormitories, a large dining hall/study hall, kitchen, office, meetings spaces and guest house. And, of course, garden plots tended by the girls which just happen to include tomatoes among the many vegetables.

And the grand total earned from these sales from 2016 through 2022? An amazing \$20,943.65!!! Not a bad effort for someone who will soon be 86 years old and just happens to love tomatoes!

We would be remiss without recognizing those stalwart friends who have helped with the sale for all of these years. Among them have been Bernadette Vangool, Dorothy Bird, David Miller, David Meyer, and Robert Clipperton as well as Jocelyn Young, Rina and LeRoy Royer, Ron and Norma Evans, and Willie's grandchildren. Asante sana wote!

by Sara Williams

Notice to CHES Sponsors

If you have not yet paid for your girl's fee for 2022, we would appreciate receiving it. With the 2022 Kenyan school year not starting until May 2022, sponsors may be confused as to when those fees were due. Most sponsors paid in December 2021 in order to receive their tax receipt for 2021 but some sponsors chose to wait until their girl actually started the next form and have forgotten to send in monies for 2022.

Sometime in the coming month you should receive a printed invoice reminding you that the fee continues to be \$600 for the 2023. Thank you to those who have already sent in your \$600 for 2023. We appreciate receiving it by early December 2022 so we have sufficient funds to send to Africa in January. The school year in both countries will return to its previous form before COVID - January to the end of November.

A reminder that funds can be sent by cheque or e-transfer. Please phone our office (778-565-5261) to receive information as to how to do a bank transfer of funds directly from your bank account into the CHES bank account if you are not familiar with e-transfer procedures.

If making donations by credit card through 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. An income tax receipt is given directly from Canada Helps so you will not receive another one from CHES.

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.

Follow CHES on Facebook

CHES has revived its Facebook page. The page had been dormant for a few years but it's up and alive once again. This platform will be used to promote the great work being done by all involved in CHES and will reach a larger, more global audience. We will be posting photos and sound bites about various projects and successes. Feel free to post a thought or comment or take part in any discussions. You need to search Facebook for the full name, Canadian Harambee Education Society. It's one of the public groups, and anyone can join and read posts.

To go directly from this online newsletter please click on the following link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/504337091247109>

by Wendy Horan



Jael Omunyang'oli

While volunteering at the CHES offices in Kakamega for the intake of new students for the 2022 school year, CHES graduate Irene Nasimiyu had the opportunity to do an interview with Jael Omunyang'oli, who was running for political office for the MCA Sheywe Ward in Kakamega county. Jael was very happy to share her journey with Irene.

The following are excerpts extracted from that interview:

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to speak how to share my journey as a CHES student, as a CHES alumnus, and also as a woman leader. Most of my interest is specifically in politics, in governance, and administration in this country. I was born and brought up in Kakamega county. I did my Class 8 examination at a local school and I achieved 500 marks. After achieving these marks, I was very delighted when I was called to join a high school. For the first year, we struggled with school fees and I did not know about CHES. The second year I was at a girls' high school but I did not finish the second year. I was chased from school to go and look for school fees. When I went home my mom was very sick. My dad had just been retired at that time. I had to stay at home for one full year to nurse my mother. That was in 2000 and then a friend of ours told us about this organization called CHES that sponsors brilliant girls back to school. So my mom took me to some offices there.

The people were very kind; they looked at my report card and my performance was quite excellent. They told me they are not able to take me back to my former school, but they would give me an alternative one. At that time, any school was good enough so long as somebody was going to take care of the fee so I don't stay another year at home. This time it was a mixed school. And I was like this is going to be tough, but I was wrong because we had other girls from CHES who were there, so there was enough support system for girls.

My sponsor was one wonderful lady called Nancy Carson. She took me up and when she came to Kenya, I had opportunity to go and meet her. I even have that photo. When I joined, my performance was excellent. I was in position one, two, and three and I was competing with the men, and for me the education meant so much more because unless I was enlightened then there was no way I was going to make change into my family and my community where my education was not given a priority.

By the time I was getting to form four, I lost my mum. So, now being the first one of nine children, I became the breadwinner. It was a shock but I was glad that CHES took me up and enabled me to get the basic education that I needed. I got a B+ in form four. At that time CHES was not taking students beyond form four. So, with a B+ it was still good enough because the government will take over, which for me getting the knowledge and stepping out there to improve my skills, to be enlightened, it meant so much more than having to remain at home after losing my opportunity at Butella.

Before I went to the university, I had all my life always wanted to become an advocate for women in public because my mother believed in education. She believed in an empowered community; so, every time she was sick, she would tell us make sure your siblings go to school. How I do not know, but that's what she was saying because I was her first one. Make sure each one of them gets an education. So, when I went, I selected my courses and I wanted to be a lawyer, because I've always been a very outspoken person, but I was given horticulture at Egatol University. If it can still give me something I will still go for it.

When my mom passed on, I decided to get married. So, like any other young girl you meet one man that says they love you and then eventually you discover you had zero opportunity. I had no opportunity to advance my career or my education. So, what I did when we disagreed, I chose to go back to school and to let the marriage go. I just looked at myself and said I am 21. I'm too young. I will bring up my siblings. I will try and work out how these kids are going to go to school and then catch up with marriage later in life.

I made up my mind I was going to be a leader. The first year I was juggling between classes and raising my siblings who I had now moved to Egatol where we were staying outside the gate, not in the hostel. They are girls so it was



impossible for me to leave them back at home. I was going to walk into offices and look for sponsorship for these kids; look for grants, look for well-wishers, look for friends, look for MPs. We are going to do business around the college. We are going to do study programs. One professor gave me an opportunity to work at the college, so I could continue with my studies. The same sponsor I had, Nancy Carson, came and took over one of my sisters who had dropped out of high school, stayed at home for two years and now was able to go back. She managed to get a B and now works with *One Acre Fund*.

It was difficult for a woman to just come out and say openly, "I'm getting into politics." They don't take you seriously, so you have to work extra hard, more than your male counterparts. You need to know more than they know, have more money than they do, and work harder at your networks to compete on the same level. Every attack is aimed at you as a woman. It becomes really difficult unless you're strong-willed.

I had to make this decision to come home and work in my community as a farmer, as a trainer, as a mobilizer and as a facilitator. The reason for me to do that is because we had bills and policies back home that were being made that did not reflect the community. The consumers of those bills did not even understand them. I say I am going to work first to get to know what happens in the community. Then I am going to vie for leadership. I'm going to place myself at that level where policies, laws and rules are made for the people.

Politics is not for the faint-hearted. But it is a rewarding experience. Can you imagine a young girl who is looking up at me, and says if this lady went for this position, I am going for another position. Can you imagine the mama of the village who says I want my girl, my daughter, my grandchild, to move and get to be seen. I was the only woman in my ward in a town that is perceived to be dangerous. But as a woman I stood up. I fight. I went out.

I sold my policies and I encouraged women to come out and vie for position, even if it's not a political position.

When the governor of this county calls for a meeting whom do they call--the chair. And who gets this position of chairs in any group? Men! So, if major decisions are going to be called, when are the issues of women going to be addressed on a table that is full of men? How are you going to talk about maternity health care, hygiene, food security, clean environment, housing, settlement, security, or clean water? Those are issues that affect women directly. So I will go out and not give up. And I would like more women, more girls on this decision-making table. Sincerely, from the bottom of my heart, my family and I are grateful to CHES, because if this opportunity had missed us, we would be struggling somewhere. I would ask the CHES girls to take this opportunity seriously. Do not waste it, because it's an equalizer. If we were not educated, we would not be at the tables that we sit at now. We would not be making decisions that we are making. We would not be making the influence that we make because of education. They may not speak loudly about it, they might not announce it, but CHES girls have a way of giving back to society which is something that is commendable. Use this opportunity to see the light. Nobody will give you this opportunity that CHES is giving you. You have to make good use of it and show that it counts. Right now, every one of those kids from my family is educated, everyone has a job. They say when you get a woman, you get a community, you get a whole society. So, it is a ripple effect and that is the opportunity that CHES gave us. We used to sing a song that Lorrie Williams is our mother. And because she is our mother, she is our umbrella and we are all under her umbrella and it has spread out. I say that I will be growing so you're looking at your future MP, your future governor. Asante.

by Jael Omunyang'oli



We Get Letters!

The Hostel at Mwahu – constructed thanks to an initiative from Stelly's School in Central Saanich – is now occupied and fully operational. The new facility continues to be greatly appreciated by those who live there as can be seen from the following letter we received.

Thank you for building our new hostel. You have changed our lives from bad environmental conditions to a condition favorable to our health. We faced many problems in the old hostel. These included diseases like typhoid, cholera and malaria. Also, because there was no electricity, we had no light at night. Because of this darkness we had parasites like bedbugs and fleas that sucked the blood from our bodies and this affected our health.

Now we are enjoying a good environment that is favorable to our health. We now have a solar panel as a source of light during the night. We also feel safe from diseases and parasites.

This favorable condition will improve our academic performance. It has also motivated our parents to allow many day students to move into the new hostel because of the supportive learning environment. The parents also understand that their daughters will get good care and services because of the new hostel.

Because of all these benefits we are thanking you Stelly's students. You liberated us from poor conditions for learning to where we are at the present time. We have nothing to pay you but we say thank you very much and God bless you. We will remember you in our requisitions from God.

Your sincerely,
Neema Nade Margie

Thanks to CHES sponsors.

I'm 22 years old and have two brothers. My father passed away after the birth of the second child. When this happened, my mother left us with our grandmother and then married another man.

I began school in 2012 and had to walk 6 Kms each way to school. I didn't have a uniform and had to ask the teacher for a pen and exercise book. Many students dropped out because of the long walk to school but I continued to go. In Standard 6 I was moved to live with my uncle whose home was only 3 Kms from my school.

I was able to start secondary school with no money but received a CHES scholarship two months later. CHES supported me because my uncle had five children and had no money to spend on me.

I give a lot of thanks to you for your sponsorship because without it I could not reach this stage.

Selina Inne

Living at the Sara Williams Hostel while attending school

I have two brothers, two sisters and one young sister. We live with my mother because my father married another wife and decided to leave my mother.

When I started primary school in 2012 at the age of five, my mother had no job and was not able to provide the basic needs for my family so I had to report to school without a uniform. My mother went to my grandmother's to work at harvesting crops and left me with a neighbour who was a nurse. Two weeks after I moved in with her, she was very busy and with her job and failed to prepare food for me so I had to go to school without any food. When I got home, the door was locked so I had to sit outside until she came home after dark.

When I was in standard III my mother had a baby girl. After one year, my mother attempted to support us by selling roasted maize in the street. But then my baby sister got sick and was in hospital for two months. My mother had no money after that and I had to get a school exercise book on credit in order to do my school work. There was no way for her to pay for me to attend secondary school.



I applied to CHES and was told two weeks later that I had been accepted. I told my mother. We were both so happy and thanked God. When I entered the Sara Williams Hostel, I was so happy as I got all basic needs there. I study in a comfortable environment and I have made many friends from different schools. I promise that I study hard in order to help my family and other girls who have a difficult situation like me.

And I pray for you to have a long life so that you can sponsor other girls.

Deborah Joseph

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 for past newsletters for agent information and exciting accounts of agents' past experiences. For further information, contact 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.

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 and other materials to keep our girls healthy.

Investment Trust Fund

In recent years several of our long term sponsors passed away and left legacies in their will for CHES. An investment trust fund was established in 2021 and these monies 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.

The Big Fix

In 1958, Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe published his first novel called Things Fall Apart. This title could well be applied to some of the features of the Sara Williams Hostel in Katesh, the home away from home for around 100 CHES girls each year.

It is the time for some maintenance and improvements, and thanks to our team in Katesh work is currently underway. Broken benches and tables that are daily used for both study and eating purposes are being strengthened and repaired, as are the cabinets in all the dorms that the girls use for their clothes and personal possessions.



Plumbing issues are also being dealt with as some of the pipes and cement work needs to be repaired or replaced. Outside the kitchen are two small reservoirs from which the girls draw water to clean their plates or do their laundry. Both have slow leaks that are now being dealt with. In addition, a raised step is being built beside each tank as some of our smaller students are not able to reach the water if the tanks are not completely full.



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

Two new additions are also in process. Until now the girls have had to walk to and from the ablution block (toilets and showers) in full view of any visitors or members of the public who happen to be visiting the compound. Their laundered clothing, which includes underwear, is also on view. Tanzanian girls are extremely shy and modest and have asked if it is possible to have a bit of privacy. We initially attempted to comply with this request by planting a hedge. This created two interrelated problems. It grew so quickly that it was hard to contain and, like most vegetation in Tanzania, it was loaded with long, sharp thorns. All too often a girl seeking the washroom after dark and in night-time attire, got her arms, legs and sometimes her face badly scratched. We are now constructing a thornless cement privacy wall that, according to reports, is much appreciated by all dorm occupants.



While we have the fundis (tradesmen) on site, we are also constructing a small gatehouse that can be used by our askaris (watchmen) at night. CHES lies at almost 2000 metres above sea level and, thanks to nearby Mt. Hanang, there is nearly always a strong wind. It can be very cold at night for much of the year. Our askaris often need to seek some shelter and in so doing may not be able to keep an eye on the dorms at all times. Although we have never had problems involving night-time intruders, it is better to be safe than sorry. The gatehouse's position provides a clear view of both dorms and the buildings in the compound.

All the work described here will have been completed by the time you are reading this.

by Chris Harker



**REMINDER: CHES AGM - via Zoom link
November 5, 2022 @ 2 p.m.(PST)**

