

Canadian Harambee Education Society

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

Winter 2023 Newsletter #78



CHES Annual General Meeting Held on Zoom November 5, 2022

The CHES AGM was held on Zoom with 52 members attending. Members from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New York City, and Perth, Australia, were in attendance. It was wonderful to see so many people from various areas. We were pleased to have 15 former CHES agents attending the meeting. All have fond memories of their time in Africa.

Joy Ruffeski, CHES' executive director, chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone. Lorrie Williams, who normally welcomes everyone, was unable to attend. She is recovering from a stroke she had in August. Lorrie was missed and we wish her well.

Joy went over the financial reports, which were reviewed by Cheryl Rogers. We are doing well financially and have received several substantial bequeaths.

The 2021 AGM Minutes and all 2022 Reports were sent to members prior to the AGM. Each Board member who submitted a report spoke briefly and asked for any questions from those present.

CHES members are sponsoring 238 students in Kenya and 307 in Tanzania. CHES sponsors are definitely making a difference in the lives of 545 students.

Anne Norman chaired the nominations for the 2022-2023 CHES Board. The following were elected to be members of the CHES Board for 2022--2023:

Orrie Babiuk	Wendy Horan	Joy Ruffeski
Dwight Dracek	Karen Kilbride	Jeanette Taylor
Becky Finley	Mandy Klepic	Robb Taylor
Bev Ford	Nancy Mann	Lorrie Williams
Catriona Harker	Lorrie Sarah Okunyanyi	
Chris Harker	Maureen Polard	

Joy thanked the Board, Cheryl, Julia, sponsors, and contributors for doing what they do for CHES.

After the meeting a social time was held for those who wished to visit or ask questions. One question asked was if sponsor letters were getting through. Letters from Canada take two to three months to reach students. Students treasure the letters they receive from their sponsors.

CHES Office: #102B - 9030 King George Blvd.,
Surrey, BC V3V 7Y3
Phone: (778) 565-5261

CHES@canadianharambee.ca
www.canadianharambee.ca
BN 13148 8017 RR0001

Lorrie Williams Update

Lorrie is still at the Queen's Park Care Centre in New Westminster. She is receiving daily physiotherapy to increase movement on her left side. She is very determined to regain her mobility and she is working very hard to do the exercise necessary. Lorrie is positive about her recovery and she thanks all the people who have sent messages of support and good wishes.

Unfortunately, Lorrie is not able to respond to everyone but she definitely enjoys the cards, letters, and emails that she has received. Please continue to think positive thoughts for Lorrie and continue to send messages to her at lorriew@shaw.ca or by mail to Lorrie Williams, c/o Queen's Park Care Centre, Room 302- 315 McBride Blvd., New Westminster B.C. V3L 5E8.

by Karen Kilbride

Safari to Maasai Mara National Park

Becky Finley volunteered as a CHES agent in Kenya from January to May, 2022.

While I spent most of my time in Kakamega, I was able to take a bit of time to go on a weekend safari. On the way to the Maasai Mara National Park we crossed into a few different counties that were obviously more affluent than Kakamega county. They appeared to get more rain and were therefore lush. One of the bigger towns had bigger buildings in better condition. That being said, they were still surrounded by a shocking amount of poverty.

Saturday was a full day of the safari game drive and getting close-up views of the animals. The local Maasai chief's son wanted to join us for the day, and he ran over about 6 km in very short time to meet us. One could see by the number of vehicles roaming through the park that tourism has certainly picked up. The drivers are all on the radio together so they can tell each other where they spot the animals. I was lucky enough to spot some of the larger animals. Maasai Mara has all the "big five" animals: lion, leopard, elephant, rhino, and Cape buffalo, and I saw them all that weekend as well as herds of zebras and giraffes.

Did you know that Maasai zebras have big stripes and Somalia zebras have thin stripes? The rhinos are endangered because poachers hunt them for the mercury that's in their horns. The male giraffes have darker colouring and the females are much lighter. When giraffes sleep, they sit down but they never put their heads down. They are always erect because they have high blood pressure. It made the tour all the more interesting to have a Maasai there to offer additional bits of information.

The high point of the whole safari was getting to visit the village where the chief's son lives. They appear to live still much as they did a hundred years ago. He invited me to come over and take a tour. His village consists of about 200 people. As soon as I arrived, the men all came over to greet me with smiles in a warm welcome. Traditional roles include men tending sheep, cattle, or goats and women doing all of the household chores, which also include building an animal pen to protect animals at night, fetching water (which could be a long distance away), doing laundry by hand, and even building the house for her husband.

They performed some dances that they do for community celebrations. One is actually more of a competition done at the time they are selecting wives. It's a jumping dance whereby the man who can jump the highest gets the best selection of wives and is likely to have to pay less cattle for her dowry. Men are allowed to take many wives. When they do marry, the wife has to build a house for her husband. It takes about three months for a woman to build the mud house and have it readied by smearing with cow dung. The huts only last for about nine years and then the tribe moves on and each wife has to build another. I was invited in by the chief's son to see his first wife's home. You first entered an anteroom and then a main room used for living, cooking, and eating. To the right side is an area where all the children sleep and to the left the parents' room. The last door opened to a guest room. There was no light except through a small hole to let out the fire's smoke.

They all wanted to have their pictures taken. They wrapped a shuka around me, which is one of their blankets that they use for traditional clothing, and had me pose with the group. Then the chief's son wanted me to pose



with only him. Before they used the shukas they simply wore animal skins. They adopted the shuka from the influence of the Scottish people who first visited the area wearing their kilts. The Scottish also brought the sheep and the technique for weaving cloth from the wool.



I noticed that only one of the men had long hair. He is about 19 years old and has just returned from his manhood journey. When the boys are 16, they are circumcised in a ceremony and then they are sent out into the wild to survive on their own for three years. Prior to that they will have been taught lots of knowledge of plants, used for medicinal herbs, and hunting techniques. They used to be sent out individually but now they go out as a group. They don't cut their hair during that time and one of their primary goals is to kill a lion. They go as a group now to conserve the number of lions that they kill so that it's not one each. When they return after the three years is up, they will have their heads shaved.

Next the men took me over to where some wives had gathered to make crafts. This is a big source of income for the Maasai as well as the fee to enter their territory. They have used the funds to build an elementary school in their territory. Most Maasai would not attend high school. The chief to be was one of the few men who was sent to a government school. He speaks their traditional language Maa, as well as Swahili, English, and French. Then they gave me a demonstration as to how they start a fire. They rub two pieces of wood together using their blades as a base. One is cedar the other stick is a hardwood. Eventually it sparks and lights some cow dung and then is fanned to bigger flames.

All in all, it was an exciting and enlightening experience. There was a stark contrast to the way the Maasai live and they way we live. In fact, the contrast between the towns and villages outside of the Maasai is profound. They are like an island in the centre cut off from the rest of the country.

by Becky Finley

Facts About Tanzania

The majority of our CHES girls live in Tanzania, a land many of us know very little about. Here are some interesting facts:

- It is almost exactly the same size as British Columbia.
- B.C. has a population of under 6 million whereas Tanzania has more than 58 million.
- Currently, it has Africa's only female president.
- Tanzania was never a British colony. When the British took over Tanzania from the Germans in 1919, they made it "Protectorate"; a territory that was always destined to be given its independence.
- More than 38% of the land area is protected (parks or reserves).
- Mt. Kilimanjaro is the world's highest free-standing mountain.
- Ngorongoro Crater is the world's largest caldera that is not underwater.
- Serengeti Park is a World Heritage site.
- The annual wildebeest migration in the Serengeti is the world's largest migration. Nearly 2 million animals are constantly on the move.
- Every February, 8,000 wildebeest calves are born each day.
- Jane Goodall did her study on chimps at Gombe Stream in Tanzania.
- There are four groups of people in sub-Saharan Africa: Bantu, Nilotic, Iraqw, and Hunter-Gatherers. There is only one place in Africa where they are all found in the same place. It is around the town of Karatu in Tanzania.
- Eight countries are found on Tanzania's borders: Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Kenya.



- The world's longest and second deepest lake, Lake Tanganyika, is on this country's western border.
- Zanzibar, part of Tanzania, is the site of the world's shortest war (just over half a hour).
- Julius Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania, translated many of Shakespeare's plays into Swahili. He was known as Mwalimu (teacher).
- No current CHES girl or any member of staff has been infected with COVID.

by Chris Harker

Tomatoes Provide Solar Power

The long-term drought throughout East Africa impacts many. CHES is no exception. As much of the electrical power in Tanzania is generated from hydro, the shortage of water had led to a reduction of the power supply throughout the country.

Almost every day the power is cut or reduced in Katesh during the daylight hours. This had meant that our office cannot rely on using the computer and copier which is often essential. A heavy, noisy, and smelly generator can be lugged into use though this is not an easy task for our petite Office Administrator Bernie.

The solution we have been considering for some time is to install solar panels on the roof of our office and the necessary infrastructure somewhere below. The problem has been the cost involved.

Willie to the rescue!!

This past year's tomato sale in Saskatchewan provided CHES with a donation of around \$4000. That amount not only covered the cost of all the repairs required on the CHES compound; it also paid for the estimated \$1,000 needed to purchase and install the solar equipment thus ensuring there is power in our office.

Asante sana Willie.

by Chris Harker

Sponsor's Letters Bring Joy to Students

My name is Lorrie Sarah Okunyanyi. I am a CHES alumna, graduated in 2014 at Musoli Girls High School, which is a provincial boarding secondary school in Kakamega, Kenya, about an hour's drive from the CHES office. I currently reside in Surrey, working as an accountant. I have been on the CHES Canada board for close to eight years now, helping where I can and recently being involved with bookkeeping and accounting tasks as needed.



I cannot insist enough how lucky and privileged I am to have been a CHES student. I remember the joy it brought my family when we learned I had been given a scholarship. One of my best moments was when I received a letter from Lorrie Williams, who was my sponsor, congratulating me for working hard to qualify for the scholarship and encouraging me to continue with the same determination. In the letter Lorrie also shared with me a bit about Canada, which at the time it was very foreign to me but exciting. At the end of the term, I did send her a letter as well, appreciating her for sponsoring me, saying how I had performed in exams, and telling her about Kenya- food, weather, culture, holidays, and much more.

The majority of CHES students like myself had never been outside Kenya, let alone to the capital city, Nairobi, so letters from Canada made us feel very special and connected to our sponsors even from afar. Some of the CHES students are orphans and some never get visits at school from relatives, so receiving letters from their sponsors is the only communication aside from teachers and fellow students. Letter communication between Canada and Kenya or Tanzania is still by snail mail, but it is without a doubt rewarding and puts a smile on the students' faces, even if it is once or twice a year.

Thank you so much, sponsors and everyone involved with CHES, for your generosity and support.

I am forever grateful.

by Lorrie Sarah Okunyanyi



A CHES Success Story – Adelina Gatling

We first met Adelina, already a CHES-sponsored student, in Katesh in 2005. She was waiting to be seen by the CHES office manager. Robb handed her a book of Sudoku puzzles for her to pass the time. Later, he asked how she'd managed. She smiled and said she wondered why there were answers in the back of the book since there would be only one correct answer. By the time she had been seen by the manager, it was getting late and the buses to her village of Nangwa, 8 km from Katesh, were no longer running. Her shoes were unsuitable for the walk. Luckily Jeanette had an extra pair of running shoes that fit her and off she went. A friendship was born.

Over the years, we have kept in touch with Adelina and followed her successes. She has arranged several day trips for our safari groups to Arusha National Park, complete with reliable driver-guides, comfortable vehicles and delicious lunches. One year, she proudly brought her first-born child, Christopher, still a tiny infant, to our hotel to meet us. Most recently, she and her husband, George, graciously put us up in their beautiful home in Moshi when we had a few days between safari groups.

We hope one day to return to meet her third child, Ian, who was born in 2022, and to reconnect with this beautiful bright young woman and her family.

We emailed Adelina with a request for details of her life for a CHES newsletter. What follows is her reply. Our reaction was WOW!

by Jeanette and Robb Taylor

Adelina's Story

I am the fourth of five children from my mother, who is a small-scale farmer in Nangwa village. We lived with our mother, who basically depended on her small farm where she grew maize and beans to feed and provide for us. Since she could not afford to pay school fees, my brothers did not study further after primary school. After I finished my primary school I passed well so I was selected to join a boarding school in Kilimanjaro region. My mother could not afford to pay my school fees and school supplies. That's when we applied for sponsorship from CHES, and luckily I qualified for the sponsorship so I was able to study. CHES covered all the costs needed for my studies--from school fees, school supplies, dormitory and pocket money.

In the third year of my secondary school studies at Moshi Technical Secondary school I was among 8 students out of 200 who were selected to go on an exchange program at Huddersfield New College in the UK. This was an enriching experience and an eye opener to the outside world.

After O-levels I passed to join A-levels and eventually university where I studied Banking and Finance.

After graduating I was employed by a tour company where I had done my practical semester in the second year of university. I started working 10 days after I finished my final exams. I was quite lucky to find a job immediately after graduating. This was very important for me as I wanted to help my mother to pay school fees for my younger brother and I was determined to improve my mother's living conditions.



So I improved our home where my mother lives and took my younger brother to Moshi where I lived and enrolled him for a program in IT at Moshi University for cooperative and business studies. I paid his university fees for three years, one year of certificate and two years of diploma. After he finished with a Diploma in Information Technology there was a vacancy in Zanzibar. He applied and got the job and until now he works there.

I, on the other hand, found another job at an international NGO arranging volunteering and internships where we received volunteers and interns from all over the world. I have worked as a country coordinator for 12 years now. Also we started a small company arranging safaris and mountain climbing where I also work as manager.

In October 2021 I enrolled at the Centre for Foreign Relations in Dar es Salaam for a post-graduate Diploma in Management of Foreign Relations and Diplomacy. I like learning languages so I am learning French right now as part of my studies and I already have A2 level in German. (*CHES recently heard that Adelina graduated with her post-graduate diploma on December 3, 2022.*)

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



I am married, now have three children and live a decent life. All this would not have been possible without CHES. Thank you so much.

I am grateful that there was CHES at that time when life seemed directionless. CHES has changed the course of our lives, the story of our lives. It has given us the voice we lacked, the confidence we could have never attained, and an opportunity to touch people's lives in a positive way. My husband and I have helped and are still helping several young people getting an education and this is possible because CHES gave me that foundation for which I am forever grateful.

Thank you so much and all my love,

by Adelina Gatling

ADDENDUM: Chris and Catriona Harker recently enjoyed a six-day safari organized by Adelina. They had a great vehicle, great guide, great accommodation, and great animal sightings. **Adelina offers a 15% discount to CHES sponsors. She can be contacted at adelgatling@gmail.com.** Chris and Catriona can be contacted at chriscat@pacificcoast.net for advice about routing, timing, etc.

The Drive Home

The initial segment of travelling from our Canadian home to our office in Katesh is little different from any international excursion. Long flights, busy airports, customs officials--and suddenly we're back in Tanzania, happy, tired and muddled with the 10-hour time change. It is the final leg from Arusha to Katesh--about 250 km, or the distance from Vancouver to Merritt--that causes us to think how different from home this is.

We wind our way slowly through Arusha's chaotic traffic, a complexity of cars, buses, dala dalas, boda bodas and pedestrians. Dala dalas are minivans crammed with passengers who are undertaking relatively short trips. Most are decorated with vivid artwork and with inspirational names such as "Love and Peace," "God is Good" or "Never Give up." One puzzlingly was named "No shit." A boda boda is a cheap taxi: the passenger sits behind the driver on a motorbike. (The name derives from smugglers who used off-road motorbikes to cross the boda, i.e., the border, into Kenya.) When more than two riders are aboard, it's referred to as a shish kabob ride.

Tanzania's religious tolerance is underlined when we pass a shop named Al Hamdu. It's decorated with a large Star of David. We leave the city, drive past the local airport and are on our way. The road is lined with sisal plants, whose sharp rigid prongs are carefully negotiated by those who require a bathroom stop. The road itself is paved, but speed is restricted both by "sleeping policemen," known at home as speed bumps, and real cops who monitor speeds seemingly at every vestige of a community.

In late September, well into this exceptional dry season, the land is parched. Brown and tans are the colours of the day. Somehow, though no vegetation is noticeable, small herds of goats, sheep and occasionally cattle survive, attended by Maasai boys, some looking as young as six. We pass a group of orange jump-suited convicts digging a trench. No guards are in sight.

Almost all the water holes we pass are dry. How the livestock survive is a wonder-- or the wildlife for that matter, for we see occasional small zebra herds. Small communities of Maasai houses known as bomas blend into the dusty landscape, their mud-walled homes a perfect camouflage. Trees are rare and frequently entangled with monster ant hills that often exceed a height of two metres. And at any given time we see half a dozen dust devils; these mini tornadoes swirl vigorously, charge across the plain for a hundred metres or so and then suddenly cease to exist. Detritus that has been flung into the air now flutters aimlessly to earth.

Sadly, all too noticeable along the roadside are thousands of plastic water bottles. The only safe water to drink has to be boiled or bottled, and yet no rubbish bins, no garbage collection nor any recycling projects exist near here.

We stop for a late lunch of chicken and chips in the regional capital of Babati. Then onward, with each kilometre bringing us closer to familiar territory. Mount Hanang appears and draws us towards Katesh at its base. Thanks to a higher elevation and the impact of the mountain on prevailing winds, a slightly moister climate prevails here. Much of the land is cultivated, although it is not productive at this time of year.



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

Six hours after departure we drive into the CHES compound to be welcomed and hugged by those we now know so well. We're no longer aware of any differences. We are home.

by Chris Harker

Memories of a Tanzanian Wedding Reception

While in Katesh in October, we were invited to a wedding reception by Naomi. Her friend's son Godlisten, was marrying Vivien on Saturday afternoon and we were invited to attend the reception, due to start at 4 p.m. Naomi suggested that due to "African Time", there was no point picking us until 5:00. She arrived at 5:45 and we were among the first to arrive at 5:55.

The impressive venue was an enormous outdoor space, perhaps 100 meters from front to back. Along each side were sideless peaked tents while the far end of the compound reminded me of a throne room with a raised dais, columns, decorations with much tinsel and colour and two chairs for the new couple in the centre – once they arrived. On each side of the throne room were large areas – one for the groom's family and one for the bride's. There was a huge unpaved open space in the middle that permitted socializing, circulation and eliminated any sense of the place being crowded.

We were led to table #1, one row back from those tables reserved for the family of the bride. I think it was not because we were *mzungus* but because we were Naomi's guests and it became obvious that she was the chief organizer. Although our view of the whole celebration was stellar, it put us very close to a speaker the size of a small car that was blasting out lively, raucous, Swahili music. On the rare occasions when the music ceased, an energetic MC kitized and joked with the crowd. This made conversation difficult but the upbeat mood and the colourfulness of the occasion was ample compensation. We sat with Bernie and, occasionally, Naomi who was frequently back and forth. She and her team were busy as this was a massive event, the first of its kind held in this site. They all did an incredible job. We were joined at some point at our table by an elderly lady who said nothing. I think she just wanted a front row seat.

The place began to fill, while simultaneously, a team ran cables and adjusted lighting. We were brought a bowl of banana porridge but apart from that, little happened for a while except that it got dark and cooler. Catriona and I were both wearing a long-sleeved shirt and a short-sleeved fleece. As the evening wore on, this proved to be inadequate.

In due course a bevy of six dancers appeared and worked their way from the entrance to the steps of the "throne room". They then ushered in a happy couple to great acclaim. They turned out to be the Best Man and Bride's Maid. However, the Bride and Groom then arrived – looking handsome and gorgeous of course – and took their places looking out at us with their "attendants" seated off to the side. By this time all 800 guests were in place. Throughout all this, two videographers were recording every moment.

After an introductory prayer by three ministers, significant members of each family were introduced. Most had something to say and often this involved announcing to the newlyweds the amount of money they'd be receiving. Following this, the male guests were invited to line up and, to music and in a sort of Congo line, donate an amount to (I think) the parents of the groom who were paying for the evening. The female line (much longer) then did the same thing. We were later told that 700,000 shillings had been raised in this way. What a tremendous idea!

Catriona and I were impressed with the variety of dresses and hair do's; all so colourful, stylish, and attractive. Apart from whatever everyone was wearing it was evident that everyone was having a great time. From time to time, various people appeared at our table to "hi and hug" as they were friends we've come to know over the years. Despite being chilly, this was heartwarming.

Long lines then formed again to congo forward with presents. In many cases this was kitenge though this lengthy segment ended with the presentation of a gas stove to the parents of the groom. Judging by the looks on their faces and the multi hugs that ensued, they were delighted.

All this was accompanied with speeches, replies to speeches, the odd additional prayer and, in my opinion, unnecessary comments from the MC. Catriona and I understood little although we often knew specific words. But we were by this time, incredibly cold and amazed at Bernie who sat with us throughout wearing a dress with bare arms and a low neckline. When Naomi appeared and said, "Let's go", we leapt to our feet ready to head to the car. However, she meant "Let's go and present our gift". And so the four of us, me feeling very self-conscious and Catriona feeling faint and light headed from the cold, had to dance our way up to the thrones and present our gift – a couple of bowls that Bernie had bought that afternoon. Being the only white people there made us



stand out just a tad. I think we were applauded but I couldn't be sure I heard properly over the volume of the music.

Thankfully, when we danced back to our table Naomi suggested that we could "really" go now. And so we did, being almost the first to depart. It was just after midnight.

... but lest this be considered a slightly jaundiced report of how Catriona and I interpreted this event. Let's look at it from the point of view of the other 798 guests. The reality.

It was a truly joyous occasion; a wonderful celebration not only for the newly married couple but a respectful honouring of their families and in particular, their parents. The traditions here may be different from ours but perhaps more logical and valid in a culture where couples don't live together and amass a houseful of possessions prior to marrying. It was "An Occasion" to buy a new outfit, meet friends, feast, dance, sing, and truly enjoy themselves in a small town where a lot of people know a lot of people. Everyone had a most amazing time. And, despite the fact that we were pretty chilled for much of the evening, so did we.

by Chris Harker

Help - We Need More Sponsors!

Sadly, some of our sponsors are "aging out" and the financial circumstances of others are changing. The result is that we are losing sponsors and at a time where the need to help school girls achieve their potential is more important than ever.

PLEASE, CAN YOU HELP by finding one or two new sponsors? Are you comfortable asking extended family members, friends, colleagues, team-mates, classes, social or church groups if they would like to support a girl in Kenya or Tanzania? Refer them to our website canadianharambee.ca

If the \$600 a year is a stumbling block for some, they can share the cost with one or two others. Some sponsors prefer to pay semi-annually or even monthly with post-dated cheques, although most send CHES \$600 each year. Don't forget to mention that a tax receipt is issued for all donations over \$20.

Many thanks if you are able to help CHES help just one more girl.

When Sponsorship Ends for Tanzanian CHES Students

CHES sponsorships cover all expenses relating to education in Forms I - IV for selected qualified girls in the Hanang District. If your girl does sufficiently well in her Form IV finals, CHES will support her through High School (Forms V and VI).

Success at this level often leads to university. CHES does not continue support at this level. How then, can a CHES girl who, by definition, is without financial resources, expect to attend?

This is where the Tanzanian government steps in. If it can be verified that a potential student has been supported by a registered NGO, the government will provide the student with a long-term loan that will cover her university expenses but which has to be paid back once the student graduates and begins to work. The last three words are significant as students frequently fail to find employment as soon as they graduate. Jobs may exist but the funds to cover salaries often don't. Hence a student who qualifies say as a teacher may have to wait a lengthy period to find a job. Often years.

The government checks all loan applicants to ensure that they are legitimate. On the first day of our recent visit to Katesh in late September, Catriona and I met with Mr. Mandara from the Higher Education Loan Board. He needed to verify that a number of our Form VI graduates had indeed been supported by CHES throughout their secondary education. Naomi and Bernadette, our local Treasurer and Office Administrator respectively, had the necessary paperwork on hand and all applicants were cleared to receive their loan.

Prior to departing, Mr. Mandara took time to thank CHES and everyone connected with it, for our combined support for talented young ladies. "Without you, their dreams could not be fulfilled and our country would lose the contribution they will certainly make".

by Chris Harker

