

Canadian Harambee Education Society

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

Spring 2024 Newsletter #82



SELECTING FORM 1 STUDENTS IN KENYA

Selecting Form 1 students in Kenya is a lengthy and involved process. The number of new students selected depends on the number of sponsors we have and qualified girls always far exceed the number of students CHES is able to accept.

This year interviews were conducted daily from December 4 – 19 with 556 girls coming to the gates for interviews. However, only 260 students met CHES criteria and each girl had to be interviewed and the information provided as to need had to be verified. Of these 82 were deemed very needy but unfortunately only 57 students could be selected.

On January 4 and 5, the new students came with their parents for orientation. Contracts were signed, uniform chits and school supplies given, and school placements were assigned. CHES grads, led by alumni Edith Olwande had fundraised some money and bought toilet paper for all the 57 students. CHES expectations and student's responsibilities were given by office manager, Rebecca Odhiambo. School for Form 1 students then commenced on January 15.

by Rebecca Odhiambo



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BUY A RAINCOAT?

The girls who board at the Sara Williams Hostel in Tanzania attend four different schools. All students have to walk at least some of the way, to and fro. Those attending Ganana Secondary have a 50-minute walk each way. When it rains, they and their books can get very wet.



Nine years ago, sponsor Robb Harker organized a very successful crowd-funding appeal that garnered enough money to cover the cost of 100 first-rate reflective raincoats. Since then, the girls have worn them to walk back and forth to school and around the hostel compound when it rains. They are also used by our watchmen who are outside all night.

Nine years takes its toll on most things; raincoats included. Some now are literally falling apart -- not good news in this year of exceptionally heavy rain.

We would like to replace at least 40 at a cost of \$25 each so that one and all will be prepared when the next rainy season arrives.

If you would like to purchase a raincoat for a CHES girl, please send a cheque or e-transfer to the CHES office and be sure to indicate what this extra donation is to be used for. Tax receipts will be issued.

Many thanks in advance to those who help to keep our girls dry.

by Chris Harker

FAREWELL TO A WONDERFUL SUPPORTER

CHES lost a wonderful friend and supporter on February 12, 2024, when Patricia Crossley died at the age of 85. Three CHES directors, two former agents, and several sponsors were among the many who attended her funeral service at Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria on March 13.

Pat was born in London. She studied there, met and married her husband Rod, and went on to live and work as an inspiring educational leader in France, Germany, Tanzania, and Canada. In 2017, she was deservedly awarded the Governor General's Meritorious Service Medal.

After Pat retired, she and Rod volunteered to serve as agents for CHES in Kenya. They caught the "Africa bug" and later formed their own NGO – TEMBO (Tanzania Education and Micro-Business Opportunity). For 16 years both spent six months a year in Kakamega, Kenya. One of Pat's ambitions, largely successful, was her Virtues Project; here she strived to stop corporal punishment in at least 50 schools.

Although focussed on her own projects, her interest in and knowledge of nearby CHES enabled her to be of inestimable help and support on numerous occasions to novice CHES agents. As recently as last year Patricia and Rod were back again living in the Kakamega CHES House and volunteering for CHES and TEMBO at the same time.

Patricia will be mourned by CHES and by many others on three continents.

by Chris Harker



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KENYAN WORKSHOPS

Workshops were held from November 24 to 26; 228 students attended from Forms 1, 2, 3, & 4. There were 16 workshop presenters (many former students), 8 workshop helpers, 2 guest speakers for plenary sessions, and 1 sign language interpreter. The topics covered were:

Plenary sessions (all students)
Poverty is Not My Option
The Inner (ME) Potential

FORM ONE

Course Choices
Reproductive Health
Self-Awareness
Math Tricks

FORM THREE

Stress Management
Study Skills II
Assertiveness
Career Options

FORM TWO

Teenage Hood Management
Study Skills I
Youth and Technology
Conflict Resolution

FORM FOUR

Critical Thinking
Way Forward After Form Four
Financial Literacy & Income Generation
Smart Transition to Adulthood

Team building activities were managed by former students. Evenings there were filled with talent shows.

by Rebecca Odhiambo



MEETING VICTORIA

Six years ago we were assigned our new CHES girl - Victoria Sixberty. Because we have the privilege of visiting Katesh relatively frequently, we have got to know her well. Victoria (the stress is on the third syllable) is quiet and serious. She is an excellent student who has developed from an early teen to a lovely young lady whose ambition to be a doctor we are sure will be fulfilled.

When we were in Katesh in January, we visited her at Nangwa High School where she is five months away from graduating from Form VI. Her “combination” is physics, chemistry, and biology courses - well suited for her future goal.

We met the head teacher, who praised CHES for its work and insisted on calling all nine CHES students from their classes to meet us.

After the obligatory photo op, we had a private word with Victoria as it is unlikely we will meet again. We hugged and wished her well and added that if we managed to return to Tanzania in four or five years and happened to require medical attention, we would be happy to put ourselves in her (by then) capable hands.

We look forward to the new student we will be assigned next year but Victoria is a charming young lady we will never forget.

by Chris and Catriona Harker



VISITING CHES GIRLS AT ST. ANGELA'S SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

CHES not only provides sponsorship to regular students but also gives scholarships to a few students with special needs. It is a delight to meet these girls as they are so thankful for the opportunity. As with all the girls CHES agents have an opportunity to interact with, they enjoy meeting with us as well. Because there are few such students, we are able to be more personal with them.



The Patron is a wonderful woman who truly loves working with the girls and is able to communicate fully and richly with them. She has told me that she couldn't imagine working with hearing girls.

Last year the four girls sat with us and showed us their art books - one in particular was a good artist and she told many stories with her art. This year because most of the girls are in the vocational side of the school, we met with them in their classroom where they learn to do things such as knitting, crocheting, doing hair, and other practical things. They also operate a store not far from the school but in the town. They have a knitting machine there

which they operate behind the counter and they sell sweaters, mats, shawls, scarves, and so on. They are very proud of this opportunity and learn customer service too.

by Barbara Melera

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WE HAVE TOMATOES!



We know that last year was supposed to be “the last sale” for Tomatoes for Tanzania, but . . . you can’t keep a good man down and Willie now has two greenhouses full of tomato plants.

The sale will be held on Saturday, May 18th, beginning at 10 a.m. at Sara William’s place, 1161 Eleanor St., Grasswood, Saskatchewan.

Contact her (sew130@mail.usask.ca) for more information re: variety descriptions, prices, directions, etc.

Please mark the date and spread the word to your friends, neighbours, family, post person, and colleagues.

All monies go to the Canadian Harambee Education Society’s hostel in Katesh, Tanzania - the home of about 100 impoverished girls who are supported through secondary school through this registered Canadian charity.

Take care. Hope to see you on May 18th!

by Sara Williams

FROM STUDENT TO PRINCIPAL

We first visited Katesh in 2001 and were, in fact, there during the infamous 9/11 catastrophe.

That’s 23 years ago, and there have been a lot of changes during such a period.

We first met Guhele when she graduated from Form IV and we shared her excitement as she bussed off to teacher’s college. We were there when she received her first assignment to teach at Nangwa Primary school.

Since then, she has married, had two sons, purchased a house and, more recently, been assigned as head teacher at a new primary school with the iconic name of Ngorongoro.



The school sits on a ridge that slopes southward from the base of impressive Mount

Hanang. There is an incredible view, a somewhat contained games field and, as always, not enough classrooms for the current 387 students who attend. Several classes are on shift.

In Tanzania, teachers do not apply to become a principal. There is no competition nor any interview. One is simply told by a senior education officer that “next year you will be the head teacher at Ngorongoro Primary.” And off you go, with a lot of extra responsibility and no increase in salary. The system seems to work as all the mwalimu mkuu (principals) we have met have been doing a first-rate job. Guhele is no exception. We hope to be able to follow her career from afar as future visits to Katesh for us may be limited.

by Chris and Catriona Harker



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FORM FOUR LEAVERS GRADUATION PARTY

The Form 4 Leavers Graduation Celebration was lovely. Almost all the girls were able to attend, some arriving early. We had decorated the compound, there was music playing, Board Members and invited guests in attendance, and a sense of excitement. The MC was one of our Board Members who did a wonderful job - he encouraged interaction and kept the audience interested and the program moving along.



The guest speaker, Cynthia Shivachi, who herself was a CHES graduate spoke "On Life Beyond Grades" reminding the girls that there was a lot more to success than good grades, although that is important. She talked of being able to reach dreams if willing to work hard including making money while at university; she said that she herself had done washing for other students. She is now a doctor, has been working for several years, is married, and has two children. She is currently studying to become an Emergency Doctor, a 4-year course. At present there are only 12 doctors with that speciality and all in Nairobi. The girls really loved the fact "that she was one of them" and had many questions for her.

It was a proud moment for the girls and for all watching when each girl was called up and received her diploma. Each also received a pen embossed with the CHES logo and the words Proud Girl. The school diplomas are important and the CHES diplomas hold a special place in their hearts as they represent their membership into a special society that gave them the opportunity and support they needed.

After the formalities all were treated to a delicious lunch cooked at the back of the compound. The girls ate outside while the guests ate inside - the office having been turned into a fine dining room.

As the afternoon went on girls left, having enjoyed the day very much. Many chatted together making plans to stay in touch.

by Barbara Melera

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO SPONSOR

Our office is occasionally contacted with a message that says, "As I'm getting older, I don't think I should commit to sponsoring a girl for an additional four years. Please accept my donation, but I don't think I should sponsor."

We understand and of course welcome such donations as we incur many expenses in addition to our main focus of sponsoring girls through secondary school.

However, pictured here is Noel Parker Jervis, a long-time and obviously optimistic sponsor from Victoria who, at the age of 99, undertook to sponsor Gloria Patrice (shown in the photograph on the table with Catriona Harker). Noel is now 103 and is delighted to learn that Gloria is now halfway through her final (Form IV) year. He anticipates sending her congratulatory wishes in December,

Supportive brother Chris Harker (a mere 84) is shown behind Noel.

by Chris Harker



A GENEROUS GIFT

CHES has been fortunate, once again, to receive a grant from the R.R. Smith Memorial Fund Foundation, this time for \$2,000.

The funds are to be used for “school supplies and hygiene” and will be spent when the girls in both countries assemble for their tutorial session (Tanzania) or their workshop (Kenya).

The RRSMFF has supported us generously for many years and helped immensely underwriting the cost of these items, both of which are essential for the wellbeing and success of our CHES girls. Thank you to the Foundation, which is an affiliate of the BC Retired Teachers’ Association.

by Chris Harker

SCHOOL VISITS BY CHES AGENTS

The visits I participated in as a CHES were two-fold:

1. to meet with the principal and pay the school fees, and
2. to meet with the girls.

By and large the principal is very glad to have CHES girls as they tend to work hard, receive good support, and their fees are paid. We are usually very well received and spend some time talking about the girls’ progress and any special needs. When the principal is new to the position, we stress that our girls are not under any circumstances to be sent home for non-payment of fees and not for any reason without consulting with Rebecca first. Usually while we are at a school we are given lunch or at least a snack.

The highlight is always meeting with the girls. The Patron arranges for an empty classroom for us to meet in; although depending on the number of girls we may meet outside or in a smaller space. During these meetings the girls may each introduce herself or they may be introduced form by form. Each girl will typically say good morning/afternoon addressing the principal, patron, guests, and fellow students often adding “. . . of Excellence” to each category. Each of us from CHES then speaks - myself and other agent if present usually speak for a couple of minutes bringing greetings from CHES Canada and sponsors and speak of the satisfaction they bring sponsors who are happy to give them opportunity and hope they do well.

As there were two CHES agents this year during school visits, Naomi (the other agent) gave the statistics of how many girls came to the gate, how many were interviewed and how many received scholarships pointing out that for each of them who received one 7 did not.

Following the agents the patron, perhaps principal, and always Rebecca would speak. Each of these were made in a blend of English and Kiswahili and often focussed on the need for the girls to do better. The girls were brought almost to tears at times and then brought up to great heights when they received the message that CHES was confident they would do well, that they are bright girls. Time is spent encouraging them to work together and to help each other in weak areas and share their strong areas.

Afterwards we would gather the girls together outside for picture taking and, when possible, take the opportunity to talk girls individually.

by Barbara Melera



CREATING LASTING MEMORIES

Although I travel to Tanzania regularly for CHES business, I rarely visit the game parks. However, as my Tanzanian godson was graduating, I decided that creating a life-long memory for him would be an appropriate gift. Just like citizens of any locale, people rarely visit many of the attractions in their own country. This is even more so the norm in places like Kenya and Tanzania where money for such travel is just not there! It is my belief that understanding how the economy of Tanzania depends so much on tourism, going on safari was a chance for educating my godson!



We departed Katesh early morning and approached Lake Manyara National Park via the “back” entry. We saw baboons and a vervet monkey as we drove through villages towards the park. At the gate we were entertained by two juggler/acrobats while we waited for the paperwork to be completed. Over the following five days we visited the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, and the Serengeti and Tarangire National Parks. We saw the “big five” as well as a myriad of other animals and numerous birds. Watching my godson see and come to understand the animals, I knew that I had made the perfect choice for his graduation gift.

If you wish to create a lasting memory for yourself or your family, you may wish to consider such an experience.

Travel is the best education you don't want to miss out on in your lifetime! In previous newsletters there have been articles about one of our Tanzanian CHES graduates who operates a safari business and gives a 15% discount to CHES sponsors. I used Adelina and her company www.budget-safari-tanzania.com to plan this experience for my African family.

NOTE: when directors or agents visit our facilities in Kenya or Tanzania, they pay their own travel costs to Africa and living expenses while there. There is no cost to CHES as all money donated by sponsors and contributors goes directly to pay for scholarships and expenses of our offices in Kakamega, Kenya, and Canada.

by Joy Ruffeski

DID YOU FORGET?

Just a reminder that we informed CHES sponsors of the increase in fees for the 2024 school year to \$650 last spring; this new amount will just cover the actual amount needed for each student's scholarship. If you inadvertently forgot that \$50, please send us another e-transfer/cheque for that amount. Receipts will be sent with our next mailing for those donations.

Our costs for operating our offices in Kenya, Tanzania, and Canada are covered by extra monies donated by sponsors, from our annual appeal, and from contributors, not from student scholarship funds. We thank those sponsors who have generously donated extra money for this purpose.

If you have not yet paid for the 2024 school term, we look forward to you doing so as soon as possible. A tax receipt will be sent once your donation is received.

