

SWAZI KIDS

The Society for the Education of Children in Southern Africa

2010

Break Through Year in 2009

PRESIDENT'S REPORT, by Pam Carlson

I am so excited that I am a bit late getting this off to all of you, in the delay, the examination results are now out for 2009. I am celebrating because we graduated 8 out of 10 grade 12 candidates who wrote their "O level" exams. The schooling system in Swaziland is based upon the Cambridge system out of England and is rigorous beyond reason, in my opinion, for a developing country. Although all 8 students are real winners, there are 2 headliners.

Philane Dlamini (sponsored by Peter Ballard) has finished with results strong enough to get him a gov't *scholarship* position into a Swazi University. Way to go Philane!!

AND (drum roll please)

Phindile Matsebula (sponsored by Richard Osler) has grades so strong that all involved, student included, feel that she is a candidate to study *MEDICAL SCHOOL* in South Africa. I have to share with you all, that as I type this it makes me swell with pride to write these words. (pictured right.)



It can be heavy sledding here alone in my little Swazi Kids office in our home. The news is not all good, there are plenty of days and seasons when the disappointments out weigh the victories, so for me to now hope to see a young woman from the rural areas of Swaziland, off to pre-med in 2011.... well, it is enough to make this middle-aged woman cry!

Back at the elementary and secondary schools, we are holding at about 65-70 children attending who would be home collecting firewood without the help of Swazi Kids. For the first time, our more advanced high school students outnumber those in primary school.



UNIVERSITY AND TRADE SCHOOL STUDENTS

2009 was a record year for students advancing to higher education, with a total of 8 students in post secondary. Special thanks to our "university sponsor," as all of these lucky young people have their costs covered by one incredibly generous couple from West Vancouver. Here is who we are helping:

- **Simphiwe** is in her 3rd year of a B. Comm. program in South Africa, on full scholarship,
- **Francesca**, originally from Ghana, is in her fourth year of nursing and midwifery, on full scholarship at the Nazarene Nursing School in Manzini (pictured left)
- **Bongani** is in his 2nd year of auto mechanics school,
- **Ntokoza** is in his 1st year of Hotel and Tourism, and loving it,

- **Colile, Bongiwe and Nomathemba** are at trade schools in catering and sewing,
- **Thembi** is in a Cooperative Studies Program aimed at learning how to run agricultural co-ops,
- **Sifiso**, an orphan and the eldest of eight, works as a high school library assistant and teachers' aid and, with his savings, has hand-built an 800-cinder-block dwelling on his homestead. He is aiming to get into teachers' college in 2010.

We may not end world poverty, but all sponsors in our program can take credit for providing the support that has allowed these and so many other children to get an education and pursue their dreams.

Education will always be the foundation of Swazi Kids' work. But there is so much else that Swazi Kids has been able to do – drilling water wells and installing rainwater catchment systems, delivering 68 hockey bags full of clothing, purchasing 200 pairs of shoes, arranging for medical care for children, and building homes for orphans and a destitute family.

Thank you so much for your involvement with Swazi Kids, and for your continuing financial support.

Pam



OUR FUNDRAISER

On June 14 we squeezed 86 people into Vancouver's Cellar Jazz Club, for an action packed evening of music, fine food, a slide show about our projects in Swaziland, a silent auction of items brought back from Africa and a live auction of wonderful sculptures from Zimbabwe and antiques from the continent.



Thanks to the generosity of Swazi Kids supporters, we raised \$10,790. Every penny went to purchasing the building materials for our 2009 building project – a modest home for a destitute Swazi family of nine.

Thanks to everyone who came out, and to:

- Our Amazing Live Band: Ben Yardley, lead singer (in from NYC) Colleen Rennison, Nathaniel Renaud, Chris Tate and of course, who could forget Hamm
- Brian Lott of the retail store "A Spot of Africa" our fabulous auctioneer and provider the stone sculptures for the live auction
- Jessie Carlson and Alicia Renaud for setting up the venue
- Marci Taylor and Trish Stewart for jumping in and handling door and money
- Nicky Kirkpatrick and Nancy Carlson for help with the silent auction
- Pam and Bruce Carlson for coordinating the whole evening



CONSTRUCTION PROJECT August 2009 a group of 12 volunteers travelled to Swaziland to build, in partnership with SOS Children's Village, a small 600 sq.ft. dwelling - 2 tiny

bedrooms and a kitchen/living/dining area, for a destitute 9-person family living in Mbabane.

The family matriarch is an 82-year-old is affectionately called Gogo Girlie. (Gogo means grandmother, see photo pg 2) She is virtually blind from cataracts and is solely responsible for her 5 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. Gogo's daughter and her husband have both died – one was murdered and the other died from AIDS.

Our work party consisted of the Carlsons (5), the Princes (4), Bruce's daughter Jessie and her husband Ben, and Barb Brumet, an American friend. Before starting work, we spent five days travelling around Swaziland, including stops at:



- **Kamfishane**, where New Life Homes cares for 30 homeless and orphaned children and operates a completely self-sufficient, free-standing farm operation, with 3,000 layer chickens, free-range meat birds, hogs, cattle and a massive market garden operation. In 2006, our first Swazi Kids building project helped construct a permanent home for nine AIDS orphans there.
- **Halfway House in Manzini**, that cares for 18 homeless children – some of whom were found on the streets and their families cannot be found, while others have been left temporarily by struggling

parents. Whenever we visit, we bring large bags of used clothing and lots of fresh food. Except for a few withdrawn ones, the kids are happy to see us. We engage in play, we feed, we wash faces and, in many cases, we just hug and hold.

- **ABC Ministry in Bulembu**, a small, poor, remote village the northwest corner of Swaziland that was, in the 1960s, an asbestos mining town. Robin and Gerry, South Africans who run ABC Ministry, care for about 30 abandoned and usually malnourished babies. On this visit, we met severely malnourished Sacha who, at two and a-half months, weighed only 2.5 kilos. Her mother birthed her in the bush, eventually got her to a hospital, but then died from TB, as a complication from AIDS. Sacha's skin was nearly black from dehydration and she seemed very close to death. However, two days later, the ABC staff had enough fluids into her that she looked remarkably vital and alert. She may have HIV. If so, she may not be adopted, but at ABC she will at least receive life-saving anti-retroviral drugs. (Lori Prince with an ABC baby girl, right)



We love traveling to these projects, to offer support and encouragement. These unsung heroes often work in obscurity, but routinely save young lives and provide nurture for the many Swazi children who fall through the cracks.

Now, after that diversion, let's get back to our construction project! The money we raised at the Cellar Jazz Club event purchased all the building materials, but what we did not realize until we got to Swaziland was how steep the building site was - 149 steps from the site up to where the building materials were delivered. Bringing the materials down to the site meant loading ten 20-kilo cinder blocks into a rickety old metal wheelbarrow and careening down a narrow, slippery dirt path, with other volunteers scrambling out of the way at the last second. Our seven men made 20-30 trips each daily, with no injuries to report. Work Safe BC would not have been impressed!

Then there was the mortar mixing – the glue that holds the cinder blocks together. Teams of four mixed fine sand, course river sand, cement and water together in a delicate balance that produced the right consistency but did not harden before those who were laying the blocks set them in place. After eight days of hard labour, the walls were up, some of the door and window frames were in, and the roof trusses were added. After we left, the local Swazi community moved in to complete the job.

The onsite supervisors from SOS Children's Village gave flattering feedback about our volunteers' commitment and follow-through, and the work ethic of our three teenagers – they made us proud!

Before leaving, one of our volunteers wanted to buy clothing for Gogo – the threadbare outfit she wore every day was probably the only one she owned. And it was new school shoes, packs and uniform trousers for the two elementary school-aged boys. Most of our shoes and work boots were traded for hugs and hand shakes, with a liberal dose of tears from the Canadians and some Swazi's as we left our work site for the final time.



MATJANA FOOD PROGRAM

Thanks to Swazi Kids sponsors, many more children can go to school. However, the AIDS epidemic and the unrelenting loss of parents means that many children fend for themselves and many of them come to school hungry.

The World Food Program supplies maize (ground corn) with a bit of oil and salt, but it barely sustains life and the supply is inconsistent. Thanks to the generosity of a Langley, BC family, Swazi Kids now provides two meals a day to 160 junior students attending Matjana Elementary School. We supply bean mix, rice, dried vegetable mix, oil, salt, and peanut butter. Our teachers report significant improvement in the students' energy, alertness and learning since the food program began.

MEDICAL CARE

We recently opened an account at a private medical clinic in Mbabane, the highest-quality out-patient facility in Swaziland. Our fund means that small children anywhere in Swazi Kids' care, orphans at the halfway house or students that we sponsor, can receive prompt and high quality medical care. Two such examples would be; **Vusumuzi**, an HIV pos, mute, highly mentally challenged boy, who had his foot stitched up, and **Siphile**, a two-year-old orphan who received a proper and thorough diagnosis for Blount's Disease and Rickets (which fortunately was negative.)

FUTURE PROJECTS

Looking ahead to 2010, here are several projects we hope to begin work on:

- **Doctors Without Borders** – we hope to bring doctors, dentists and a chiropractor into rural areas to offer out-patient care and to teach local community leaders about hygiene, wound care and the use of analgesics.
- **Medical chests** – we hope to supply communities and schools with re-stockable medical chests and to train local people how to use them.
- **Care Point Center** – this will be an ambitious project. It will be a centrally located permanent structure that will begin as a feeding centre with an on-site caretaker/cook. Over time, it will expand to include a medical clinic, garden center, handicraft learning and production cent and accommodation for university students taking a “gap” year.
- **Micro Financing** – Pam is particularly excited about entering into this field in a formal and organized way. We realize there is a great deal to learn and a model exists and has operated in many countries around the world for decades. As such we intend to put together a small group and attend the course taught by Mohammad Yunnas from “Banker to the Poor” (Nobel Peace Prize winner.) Due to the ambitious nature of this line of work, we will likely not enter into this until 2011 or until after our Care Point Center is up and running. We will begin our lending co-operative meetings from our center.
- We have installed and continue to maintain 6 separate clean water initiatives, 2 manual pumps and well, 1 electric pump and well, and 3 piping and tanking projects that further distribute water in to other areas. Another water project are slated for 2010

WHO WE ARE

We are a small, British Columbia-based charity, incorporated as a provincial society with a 6-person board of directors. Swazi Kids is recognized by the Government of Canada as a charitable organization – Registered Charity #88361 5205 RR 0001.

CONTACT US

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