



2017

## Swazi Kids Newsletter

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*Zethu with the Swazi flag and a favourite prof at Ashesi U. in Ghana.*



## Zethu

As many of you may recall, Swazi Kids sponsored Zethu Shabangu to come to Canada to study at Brentwood College School for grades 11 and 12. We were able to do so thanks to the generous support of many sponsors. Zethu is from a poor family in the rural south of Swaziland, and has been in the Swazi Kids program since elementary school. She was always an outstanding student and we felt that the opportunity to study in Canada might open doors for her. She excelled at Brentwood, graduating in 2016.

One of our main goals for Zethu, part of the effort to bring her to Canada was, to try to obtain a university scholarship through MasterCard Foundations Scholarship program. This is an international fund that supports students at the post-secondary level. We are super excited to let you know that we were successful. Zethu has been granted a full 4 year scholarship at Ashesi University in Ghana. **WE WON!**

Zethu had about 9 days to absorb the news, visit family, say her goodbyes and embark upon the next huge chapter of her life in Accra, Ghana for two years. She is studying to become a chartered accountant. She loves her surroundings and the ability to study on the continent, feeling and actually being closer to home. She has made friends at  
*Continued on Page 4.*

# Manzini Halfway House Make Over

With sponsors' generous donations we have mostly completed a large makeover at the Manzini Region Halfway House. This government facility is a very basic home in Manzini that houses children. Many of you who have travelled to Swaziland will recall this place. It provides a safe home for a large number of children, from babies abandoned at birth to older girls taken from unsafe home environments.

Properly accommodated, it should hold about 8 children. Today it has 23 children in 2 bedrooms. The children are decently fed most of the time and older kids attend a local school during the day. They are, however, quite under-stimulated the rest of the time. The aunties on staff do their best, but with a ratio of 23:2, they are constantly exhausted too. Babies are carried, which is a major advantage over a real "orphanage" where infants are kept in small cribs and often not even held to drink milk. Once these babies are out of arms, though, they pretty much free range the place, searching for a set of arms or a lap to crawl up on. They are forced to put 3 to a bed, lying sideways like cord-wood.

There has never been a budget for maintenance, and over the years, it has deteriorated badly. It smells like urine, the floors are thread bare and covered in horribly stained old carpet, most of the plumbing is non-functional, window panes fractured, appliances on very last legs, there are leaks and some mold, etc. As a result of the obvious needs and important work of the halfway house, we have embarked on a structural renovation and beautification project to make life a little more comfortable and indeed safer for the children and the aunties, alike.



There are two groups of volunteers travelling down in April-May '17. They will install new beds, curtains, shelves, bedding, and other necessities. They will also begin renovations to the building including painting and repair work.

An idea, if funds permit, is to also begin renovations to the yard. We would like to pave a pathway around the inside perimeter, along the high chain link fence. This would create a cycling path inside the compound. These kids are bored and any activity we can provide is not only a happy place but also great for their coordination and development.

This has and will continue to be a very satisfying project. There is simply no funding in Swaziland for such work.



## Community Centers #4, 5, and 6

Our partnership with the Gone Rural boMake women's cooperative continues. We are nearing completion of three new community centers in the southeast corner of the country. These constructions are proving to be extremely satisfying. In addition to being the secure place of work for the weavers, they serve as hubs of learning, commerce, connection and safety. We are considering expanding our food distribution systems across this network of facilities. These latest centers are complete with a large meeting space, preschool, library and fresh water source. Swazi Kids has partnered with Gone Rural on six community centers so far and there are ten more communities in the cooperative that are needed. Each one costs about \$15,000 and transforms the lives of an entire community, enriching them, making them safer, healthier and more self-sufficient.



*Gone Rural women and children. (Photos: K. Burgess).*

# Emnotfweni School Build Project

## Brentwood College Update

January '17 marks the second year of schooling at this new high school, which Swazi Kids sponsors have fully funded. About 30 students will enter Grade 8 in January and the current class of 23 grade 8 move up a year. This has been a major success in this desperately poor corner of the country. Kids had to travel great distances by bus for secondary education prior to the construction of this new school. As a result, many children dropped out of school due to lack of funds for the bus fare. Swazi Kids, with the ongoing help of Brentwood College, intends to complete this school, with the addition of at least two more classroom blocks.

**Way to go Brentwood** for the financial, physical and emotional backing of this ambitious goal. This is our first full-on school build project. It is very satisfying work. These people maybe poor and even uneducated themselves, however they all know that they only way out of poverty and forward for their children, is an education!

*Brentwood students assist with the construction of the Emnotfweni School (Photos, K. Burgess).*



### **Zethu...***Continued from Page 1.*

university and we are delighted at her success and have every confidence that she will complete her degree and move on to a professional career.

We see this route as a possibility for other students in the future. Not to be too presumptive, but now that we have one

student from the rural areas into a great university, we feel that we may have the attention of the admissions people at the big African universities. In '17 we will be meeting with admissions committees at both Ashesi U. and U. of Pretoria to discuss future students.



## Student Updates

We are currently working with 14 students in post secondary institutions. The government run scholarship programs seemed to have improved after a few years of desperate cut backs, student-led protests and non-payment of university profs. Five of our older students have qualified for these funds, however the money is so slim that they need support to live. For these students, we pay for transportation, food, toiletries, cellphone time, internet, some housing costs and so on. All students need laptops to start their education and some need a clothing allowance. The funding to each is applied for by the individuals and needs assessed. Joe and I are very proud of our university and college students and grads. Here are just a few of the 2016 highlights.

### **Nhlanhla Dlamini:**

has now completed his civil engineering course. He has finished a year of internship on a poverty wage and is now on the proper payroll. He is earning a living wage working for a large construction company. With no parents, Nhlanhla still relies on Joe and the Swazi Kids network for emotional support, which is actively encouraged as these rural kids embark on their adult lives.

**Thembi** is now a full-fledged teacher and has a young son.

**Phindy** is working hard as nurse in a rural hospital, is raising her 1 year old son and

aspires to a masters degree in nursing in South Africa in the next few years.

**Cebelenkhosi**, has completed at a private high school, we are currently grooming him, as our highest-level student, for another hopeful MasterCard Foundations Scholarship, perhaps in Pretoria.



*Phindy and her son.*

**Ndumiso.** I am particularly proud of this young man. He is an older student who found us through Joe somehow. He had one semester in architecture school under his belt and absolutely no way forward financially. When asked, he told me that he had a son but was not in relationship with the mother any more. I liked the guy, seemed very genuine and kind. I told him we would only help him if he returned to his son's

life. He did just that. He moved back in with the old girlfriend became an active parent and has since married his girlfriend and moved into a small rented home. She does housework from the home, while he completes his architecture education.

And there are many more great stories. These kids really are making it out into the world, most with decent paying living wages. I am deeply humbled by their work ethic and drive to survive and succeed. Given the smallest leg up, these kids are performing and delivering. Thank you Swazi Kids sponsors and Swazi Kids students!

# Plans for 2017

## WHERE WE NEED HELP IN 2017

- 1) Manzini Region Halfway House, this job was estimated at \$10k in 2015. We have put in \$25k to date, with much more work to do. Any amount towards this will help these small children.
- 2) Build a bike track at halfway house, estimated \$2,000, any amount donation
- 3) Buy a kid a bicycle for \$125 (we are currently researching bamboo bikes from a local not for profit in South Africa).
- 4) Support a student at elementary school \$200.
- 5) Support a secondary student \$500
- 6) Buy a kid a bed at the halfway house, pays for half a bunk and a high quality mattress.
- 7) Buy a student a pair of good school shoes, \$80.
- 8) Buy a student a new school uniform (yes also expensive, first grade).



*Zethu horses around the local kids at Ashesi U, Accra Ghana*

## Student Support Program

In 2016, Swazi Kids raised \$162,000, up from \$126,000 raised in 2015. We have also secured our first MasterCard Foundation Scholarship, worth about \$25-40,000 per year. We currently support 40 elementary and high school students, and we are increasingly focused on seeing our students into post-secondary education, training and into careers. We are also considering expanding our food programs to reach more elementary students. Our infrastructure projects include community centers, a school, and water systems. Thus we are broadening our support of students to reach beyond individuals and provide support for communities.



*Canadian volunteers help move a 5000 l tank during the construction of the Emnotfweni School.*







*Matajana Elementary School (above); potential new food distribution center in the lowveld (r) (Photos: K. Burgess).*



### ***Reach Out***

Our ongoing efforts to improve the lives of children in Swaziland require significant funds. If you wish to make a contribution, fill in this page and include with your cheque. Make cheques payable to Swazi Kids Society.

- Any amount to use in Swazi Kids work = \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Sponsor \_\_\_\_\_ elementary student(s) @ \$200 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Sponsor \_\_\_\_\_ secondary student(s) @ 500 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Provide uniform(s) for needy students \$100 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- A child's bicycle \$150 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- A pair of much needed school shoes \$80 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Please make cheques payable to: Swazi Kids Society**

Please post to: Swazi Kids, 4415 Swaizland Rd., Kelowna BC V1W 2X2 Canada

For further information either email Pam Carlson at [swazikids@gmail.com](mailto:swazikids@gmail.com) or phone 250-309-2522.

Or: e-transfer to [swazikids@gmail.com](mailto:swazikids@gmail.com) use password: swazikids

Or: Direct donation at [www.swazikids.org](http://www.swazikids.org). **DONATIONS AND AUTO-WITHDRAWAL NOW**

